

# THE HANOVERIANS

1714—1815

by

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## PREFACE

This book is intended to provide the student and the general reader with a survey of British History between 1714, the date of the accession of George I, and 1815, the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Such a broad field has necessitated much compression and demanded a high degree of selectivity. I have purposely refrained from a detailed study of military and naval history, especially in the important period 1793-1815, knowing that it is comparatively easy to refer to the many excellent specialised books, of which Miss Carola Oman's study of *Nelson* is one of the latest and best. Because History is a combination of many factors, social, political, religious, economic and diplomatic, I have tried to show the interrelation of the various themes, without, however, unduly simplifying the course of events. If I have emphasised my own interpretation of events and even on occasions differed from the experts, it is only where the evidence has seemed to me convincing. Any errors of fact, or interpretation, that may have crept into the book are 'all my own work.'

In writing this book I have tried to keep in mind the history specialist of average intelligence, whether at school, training college or university, and the general reader who wants an introduction to this fascinating period. There can, indeed, be no question of the immense importance of a correct knowledge of history in the transitional period in which we live. Mr A. L. Rowse has pointed out that Winston Churchill's greatness arises in part from the fact that his awareness of past history provided him with an ample foundation for successful achievement in the war period 1940-5. That an able member of Parliament could in November, 1946, assert categorically within the walls of the House of Commons that Lord Shaftesbury, the well-known nineteenth-century philanthropist, was a Tory Prime Minister shows that History can never be studied too wisely or too well. It is, nevertheless, with an acute realisation

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of its imperfections, only offset by the knowledge that there exists a lively need for a book of this sort, that I have prepared this essay for publication.

There remains one pleasant duty, to express my gratitude to all those who have made it possible, not excluding the printers and the draughtsman. It would be impossible to cite the names of all the writers on this period of history without whose preliminary research this book could not have been written, but it would be discourteous to omit my particular indebtedness to the work of Basil Williams and L. B. Namier among other students of eighteenth-century history. The short list of books at the end of the book is intended as a guide to further reading, as it was obviously impracticable to compile a full bibliography, either of the original authorities consulted or of the more specialised works of modern writers. Last, but certainly not least of all, I must express my thanks to my friend and colleague, H. H. Brown, without whose wisdom, knowledge and discrimination it is improbable that this book would ever have seen the light of day.

V. H. H. GREEN.

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# THE HANOVERIANS

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. *The seventeenth-century background*

Although every break which is made in the long story of man's development is artificial and unwarranted, the historian has to make that break. Nevertheless every historical period depends finally on the immediate past. No one can understand the two German wars of 1914-1918 and of 1939-1945 without reference to the history of nineteenth-century Europe. In the same way, men and women who were alive in 1714 felt the impact of the past, remembered the stirring events of 1688, even those of 1660, and thought of them, not as past history, but as part of the very present of their lives. Sir Isaac Newton, England's greatest mathematician, had been born on Christmas Day of the first year of the Civil War and had matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge, the year after Charles II was restored to the throne. He was elected a member of the Parliament which voted the throne to Dutch William and his wife in 1689. He was knighted by Queen Anne when she visited Cambridge in 1705. He died at Kensington the same year as George II ascended the English throne. And this suggests what those studying history are so often apt to forget, that every period is inevitably interrelated and interlocked with every preceding and succeeding period.

For history is a continuous stream, now flowing fast, now slow, now ebbing, now flooding, but never completely arrested in its progress. There may be incidents, just as there are geographically significant changes in a river's course, that mark the beginning or end of some particularly important stage. Both



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1714, the year of the accession of the Hanoverian dynasty to the English throne, and 1815, the year of Waterloo, are of sufficient importance to mark the beginning and ending of a period. Yet neither event in itself interrupts the continuous story of man's development, politically, socially or culturally.

Indeed our own interpretation of what takes place between 1714 and 1815 very largely depends on our understanding of what had taken place in the seventeenth century. This was an intensely active age. Against the serene and even leisurely background of the woods and fields of a predominantly rural country, men and women were doing things and thinking deeply about every department of life, with the result that there were few places in England untouched by important religious, political and economic developments. Such movement gradually changed the face of the countryside, penetrating to the commons as well as to the cathedrals of the land, but it was never for one moment purely physical. It connoted spiritual and mental change as well. Ideas had changed since 1603. King James I had said that 'kings are not only called God's lieutenants but even by God himself they are called gods.' Later, opinions about the nature of kingship slowly altered. Sir Robert Filmer, whose book *Patriarcha*, published in the reign of Charles II, has sometimes been called the classical exposition of the divine right of kings, based his appeal on a view of society rather than on the teachings of the Bible. The views which John Locke put forward in his treatises on *Civil Government* were more far-reaching. Kings ruled, he said, by right of the contract which each made with his people at his accession, they received loyalty in return for good government. If the King broke that contract, the people were released from their allegiance. No less exciting were the ideas about the nature of man's existence and purpose, about truth and goodness, that different philosophers, orthodox and unorthodox, were circulating throughout the century.

Religion had witnessed an equally striking change. By the beginning of the century James I and Archbishop Bancroft saw that the thought, behaviour and rites of the Anglican Church

### *Changes in Religion*

must be more rigidly patterned if the Church was to retain its identity. It was this policy which led to the expansion of Puritanism and the subsequent struggle between Laud and his opponents, that formed a leading cause of the Civil War. The Commonwealth period witnessed an astonishing, chaotic variety of religious ideas and practices from the banned orthodoxy of Anglicanism to the naked Adamite and grim Muggletonian. The Restoration of 1660 clarified the situation by bringing back and re-establishing the Anglican Church at the cost of ejecting a large number of Nonconformist ministers on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662. Henceforward the Church of England only represented part of the country, and the Dissenters or Nonconformists ranked as a political force that cannot be underestimated. Furthermore it wedded the Church, despite Charles's own sceptical inclinations and his brother's Catholicism, to the established order. Whether the lower clergy became Non-Jurors or Jacobites or whether the higher clergy identified their interests with Whiggery and the Protestant Succession, there is no doubt that the Church had become subordinate to the will of the State.

Politics saw a greater change still. In brief, the struggle between the King and Parliament resulted in a victory for the latter, but the brevity of the statement conceals its intricacies. Increasingly bitter struggles between King and Parliament at the end of James I's reign culminated in the dissolution of Parliament by his son, Charles I, in 1629 and in the eleven years' personal government. What was at stake was the ultimate control of the sovereign power. The King, relying on the practice of the Tudors which he had rationalised into a theory of divine right, held that all sovereign power was finally vested in him, that it was he, as a majority of the judges concluded in Hampden's case, who could decide when the country was endangered and take appropriate measures to meet the emergency. 'Parliaments,' as Charles I said, 'are altogether in my power for their calling, sitting and dissolution.' As against this there was the claim of Parliament, based, as far as the former Chief Justice Coke could make it, on

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medieval precedent and civil law, but in effect modern and innovatory. The claim received increasing support, partly because it represented the point of view of the rising middle classes, partly because it was associated with Puritanism, partly because the lawyers detested the privileges conferred on the prerogative courts by the King, and finally because of the growing parliamentary tradition which naturally resulted from the use which the Tudors had made of Parliament.

Although Charles's defeat was primarily a defeat for the Crown, it was also a defeat for Parliament. Cromwell's constitutional experiments and the Englishman's traditional dislike of military rule only made the restoration of Parliament more likely in 1660 than it had been in 1649. Parliament and the King were both restored in 1660, even if the final authority remained in fact with the first. The Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement proved that Parliament now possessed the supreme power. The Crown remained hereditary, but it was significantly obvious, as the Act of Settlement, which vested the succession in the granddaughter of James I, the Electress of Hanover and her heirs, showed, that the King was King by right of Parliament rather than by the grace of God.

If England was approaching political maturity the country was economically far less advanced. Yet even agriculture was affected by scientific methods which, originating in the specialised farming of the United Provinces, had intruded into the seasonal rotation of crops. Piles of manuals on agriculture and husbandry reveal the latent interest. Sir William Petty, a well-known contemporary economist, mentioned the 'draining of the fens, the watering of dry grounds, the improving of forests and commons, the "making of healthy and barren grounds to bear saint-foyne and clover grass," and the improvement of fruit cultivation' as the chief advances in agricultural method which had come into use during the latter half of the seventeenth century. Although industrial progress was probably less striking, there were already signs of that startling transformation of the industrial scene that became characteristic of the last half of the coming century.

### *Colonisation*

Ordinarily industrial activity continued on only a small scale, but wealth, partly created by the commerce of the East, was available for investment in other things than land, mortgages and trading companies. Coal, which more than any other industry required capital, was slowly but steadily coming into its own, while manufacturers were beginning to stimulate the inventive fertility of the working scientist.

Colonisation was another of the more 'active' features of English life in the seventeenth century. Gold had proved the original attraction, but it was not mineral wealth that the new colonies concealed within their soil. 'When you send again,' wrote Captain John Smith, 'I entreat you rather send but thirty carpenters, husbandmen, gardeners, fishermen, blacksmiths, masons and diggers up of trees' roots, well provided, than a thousand such as we have.' And this is what eventually happened. Founded in various ways, by a company or a single individual or by right of conquest, New Plymouth, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina all grew up in the face of grave difficulties that made their early history a study in heroism and adventure. The men who came to work the colonies came for various motives. Younger sons of impoverished families left their homes to seek a fortune overseas. There were adventurers, drawn by lure of riches and love of life, as well as yeomen and small farmers who thought that the soil might be more rewarding in a new land. There were men who wished to impose the rule of the godly, or who desired to take part in the Sacrifice of the Mass without interference, or who believed, like Roger Williams, that the new world might be less intolerant than the old. In the north a prosperous trading and farming community grew up vigorous and hardworking, persistent and god-fearing. A very different society, culture and economy had developed down in the south where large estates, worked by poor whites and a steadily increasing number of negroes from West Africa, were in process of formation. Life for the ordinary settler was often hard, more particularly on

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the frontier, and it was in the triumphant mould of this pioneering experience that the American character began to be formed.

If this spirit of enterprise flourished in the American and West Indian colonies, it is no wonder that a similar spirit stimulated trade and commerce to an ever increasing extent. Despite the ebb and flow of its fortunes, the East India Company's ships sailed continuously and 'fitted the nation with great ships and expert mariners.' New products followed in their wake. tea, coffee for the newly founded coffee-houses, silks and porcelain to set the fashion for *chinoiserie*, flowed to the English ports and laid the foundations of taste. Such well-being combined with initiative harboured greatness, and possibly pride.

The intensely active nature of seventeenth-century society had thus resulted in stirring developments in every department of life. A King limited in power by Parliament and party, a Church recast and diminished in the number of its adherents, growing wealth, a steadily increasing population, industry to which capital and science were both turning their attention, a flourishing agriculture, an educated, governing minority, fast-developing colonies, a fine navy, had all been thrown up in the midst of fairly constant turmoil. No wonder George I, attracted by the security of his court at Herrenhausen, delayed his departure for England, feeling with truth that history had proved the English the most turbulent people on the Continent.

## 2. The eighteenth-century inheritance

No one can read eighteenth-century history without becoming aware of a degree of leisure which is rarely felt in the previous period. Rumbles of social upheavals may well have been heard in the distant background, but distant they remained. The foreground, like the best diaries of the period, is solid, respectable, with tinges of exquisite, eccentric and crude dilettantism here and there, of flowered waistcoat, powdered hair, leather-bound

### *The Eighteenth-century Inheritance*

book of sermons, of the political gossip and the social tittle-tattle. The portraits of these eighteenth-century men and women reveal how self-confident, complacent and prosperous they appeared to the artist. The armed cavalier of the Civil War period and the hyacinthine locks of the 1820 Romantics could find no abiding home amid the careful artificialities of a landscape set off with 'Gothick' temples, which surrounded the classical mansions of the great. Such an impression, if closely examined and analysed, appears false, for the appearance of sobriety (on occasions) and solidity (more frequently) hid forces of startling magnitude which had their origin in the previous century.

There is, however, a good reason for this feeling of quiet. All passion was not spent, but passion in certain channels had worked itself temporarily to a halt. The intense religious discussion that had provoked so much feeling and had been one of the main ingredients of the Civil War had practically ended by the accession of George I. It was not, indeed, that men and women had ceased to be moved by religion—though there were more sceptics and agnostics in the eighteenth century—but the fundamental articles of seventeenth-century belief had been so flayed and moulded in the process of debate and the appeal to arms that an inevitable reaction had set in. Religion was more tolerant, appeared far more spacious and providential, and lost through this metamorphosis the enthusiasm which piety and discord had stimulated. The eighteenth century was more matter of fact and rational than the previous period, and it is these very factors that give the rather delusive appearance of calm.

Politically, the inheritance was less placid. Yet the long struggles of the past had settled so much that there was no longer any real danger of absolutism. The Bill of Rights, conservative document as it is, confirmed the decision implicit in the Restoration Settlement, that final authority is held by the King with Parliament. There was not the slightest indication that any eighteenth-century King, including George III, ever had the least notion of challenging that verdict. The political strife that

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formed an integral part of the century's history was connected with rivalry between noble cliques, the beginnings of party differences and the formation of modern Cabinet government. No wonder that men and women admired the unique British Constitution that the seventeenth century had prepared for them.

And one might add equally well that the inheritance of the new century was as great in the fields of economic and cultural endeavour. The growing prosperity of seventeenth-century England, and the scientific turn of mind that had led to the foundation of the Royal Society, both contributed to the slow industrialisation of the country. The formation of large estates, often in the hands of newly risen families, provided large-scale farming with the capital and enterprise it required. The tradition of the past was as vital a factor in literature, for, even at the end of the previous century, writers had begun to assume the essential reasonableness of man and nature that proved to be the characteristic theme of the following period. 'Everywhere,' says Dr. Willey, one 'meets with a sense of relief and escape, relief from the strain of living in a mysterious universe, and escape from the ignorance and barbarism of the Gothic centuries'

All four themes, religious, political, economic and literary, combined to create a civilisation of startling liveliness and some attraction. The seeming apathy of eighteenth-century Anglicanism hid the evangelical fervour of Methodism, the continuity of the High Church tradition and the missionary and social work of the Clapham group. The leathery monotony of many a volume screens excellent theological scholarship of the old-fashioned order. In constitutional history the period is epochal. Much that had been vague and obscure in parliamentary tradition lay clear and open by 1815. The powers of the Crown, which had grown perceptibly less, had been appropriately shaped. The Cabinet system had crystallised, and the party system appeared far more real than it had done at the beginning of the century. The commencement of a movement to bring together the governors and the governed in a truly democratic form of government can be traced to this period. The history of the century proved

### *Social Change*

that the government of the country, in spite of its acknowledged corruption, was parliamentary.

Socially, the century witnessed a series of revolutions which changed agrarian and industrial life as the population grew more dense and the amount of its invested wealth increased. Although the greater part of England in 1815 was still rural, the march of industry had begun, machines, factories, urban areas, and canals had created what was, or would have been to a contemporary of George I, a new kingdom.

Nor was the change confined to the realm of material things. The newspaper which had been exceptional in the London of 1714 was a usual feature of urban life a hundred years later. The novel and the periodical had both taken their place in literary history. More important books were written and read than in any other previous period of English history. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, *The Wealth of Nations*, *The Rights of Man*, *The Analogy of Religion*, Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, reflect the many sides of a literary period enriched by the ideas and friendships of cultured people.

So, although the eighteenth century, enmeshed in the web of history, has many characteristics which may strike us as unpleasant, others may reveal themselves which to the scholarly mind rent by the distractions of the day hold out a fascinating appeal. 'The sunny quadrangle, the parklike garden of flowers and lawns and lake, the scholar's room, the books, pictures, musical scores, the cheerful friendly group—there is the essential eighteenth century still untroubled, complete.' So wrote a modern admirer. For all its perversions and degradations, there is an air of leisure and serenity, albeit tinged with the salt of larger themes and active movements.

### 3. *The face of England in 1714*

Although it is impossible to depict accurately the face of a nation at any given moment in its history, it is essential that an



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impressionist picture should be painted of the England which greeted George I, rather apathetically, it is true, when he landed in 1714. A traveller as he rode through England would have noted its ill-repaired roads and would have seen a land of green fields pastured by cattle, divided by hedges, fields golden with corn, heaths and moors full of sheep, and prosperous villages that centred around an old manor house or a small grey church dating back to the Middle Ages. England's villages were well-spaced, compact, and separated from each other by several miles of pleasant countryside. Each village was still practically a self-contained unit. Its squire owned the land and as Justice of the Peace upheld law and order. Its parson provided for its spiritual needs. The villagers themselves baked the bread and helped to bring in the harvest, sowed the corn, milked the cows, spun, mended and made their clothes. The towns were some distance from each other and, with the exception of London, covered a relatively small area. The general impression was pleasing, a pleasure alloyed then as now by climatic conditions, but otherwise, as a foreign visitor put it, 'comfortable, pleasant, and rich beyond all other islands in the world'.

Yet obviously such a picture requires some modification. Not all the roads were equally bad. Their state depended on many different factors; clay soil made for heavy going and gravel or sandstone for the best surface. Some roads were already in good order and others were to be improved as the turnpike trusts were founded. So, too, with the hedged fields. Not all England was by any means hedged and chequered in to fields geometrical-wise, the process of enclosure had been carried far in the west, south and east, but there was a broad middle strip, containing probably as much as half the arable wealth of east England, stretching from the coasts of Dorset and Hampshire northward to Northumberland that was still cultivated by the open-field system. Even the nucleated village vanished in those parts of the country, more particularly in the west, where the scattered hamlet and the solitary farmstead held together the framework of society.

England proper was a country of large, rather prosperous

### *The Face of England in 1714*

villages, small market towns and great estates. These spacious park-lands, where the cultured owner so often liked to try his hand at landscape-gardening, gave the country a sense of well-being which particularly impressed foreign visitors. Before George I landed, Vanbrugh and lesser architects had begun to design splendid dwellings for the rich and titled, less ornate, warmer, homelier and yet decorous manor houses provided homes for the country gentry and their numerous, if often shortlived, progeny. The new houses were commodious, panelled, elaborately decorated, carpeted and well-furnished. They stood back amid soft green lawns, orchards and gardens, the gardens were divided by hedges of box and lavender and were peopled by flowers first fully appreciated in the previous century—'the crown imperial, the tulip, the laburnum, the nasturtium, the everlasting, love-in-a-mist, honesty, the tulip tree, the red maple'

The majority of England's six million people lived in the country. Most people were to be found where the land was richest, even if other factors, the geographical position, the proximity to London, the possibility of developing local industries, contributed to the expansion of a town.

The temperate nature of England's climate in part accounts for her fertility, for the wheat of the south and south-west, the rye of the north, the barley for brewing, the oats of the wetter and colder parts of the country, all attracted the admiring attention of the traveller. Fine cattle, small in size owing to the lack of winter feeding, pastured the fields, more especially in Devonshire, Somerset, Kent, Suffolk and the Vale of Aylesbury. Although wool had been falling in price during the seventeenth century, it still remained the staple crop and thus accounted for the large number of sheep. Leicestershire, the Cotswolds, the Isle of Wight and Hereford were all centres of sheep-farming. Orchards were widely cultivated in the south and west; Kent was already well known for its apples and pears. Finely flavoured cherries were picked in Worcester as well as Kent. 'About Bromyard a cold air and a shallow barren soyl yet store of orchards of divers kinds of spicey and savoury apples.' Hops in Kent,

## Introduction

saffron in Essex and even some vines were cultivated at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Market gardens had begun to appear on the fringes of the bigger towns. This was rural England; 'the richness of the lands and the application of the People,' wrote Daniel Defoe of Suffolk in 1724, and what he said was true of all England, 'to all kinds of improvement is scarce credible.'

Although the country was still predominantly rural, more and more people lived in the towns whose influence stretched far beyond the city walls by which many of them were still encircled. London was even then a monarch among towns, unique in its size and the variety of its activities, the seat of government and culture. Inhabited, as it was roughly reckoned in 1682, by 669,930 people, it was already an imposing, sprawling city. The destruction caused by the great fire of 1666 had stimulated its further expansion. The streets remained 'narrow and incommodious' and the majority of the houses were dark and unhealthy, but the new wrought stone of Wren's city churches and the red brick of many a new mansion betokened a major advance. Perhaps the effect of the fire has been exaggerated, but the fire, and the plague which preceded it, sent many nobles and rich merchants to the countrified suburbs, and had led to the expansion of entertainment in the shape of coffee-houses and theatres to the west, and of industry to the east of the city. Among the newly built-up areas, St James's Square (c. 1668), Golden and Soho Squares (1690), Hanover and Cavendish Squares (1717) and the north side of Piccadilly may be mentioned, while in London's east Spitalfields, whither the Huguenot weavers had settled after Louis XIV had revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685, was the scene of much activity. There was no plan about the city, like Topsy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* it 'grewed' and went on growing. It was then, as it continued to be, a vast conglomeration of churches, merchants' warehouses, town houses, theatres, shops, coffee-houses and tenements dominated by the stately dome of St Paul's new Portland stone. The Thames, 'a goodly and well-conditioned river,' was busy with watermen and trading ships.

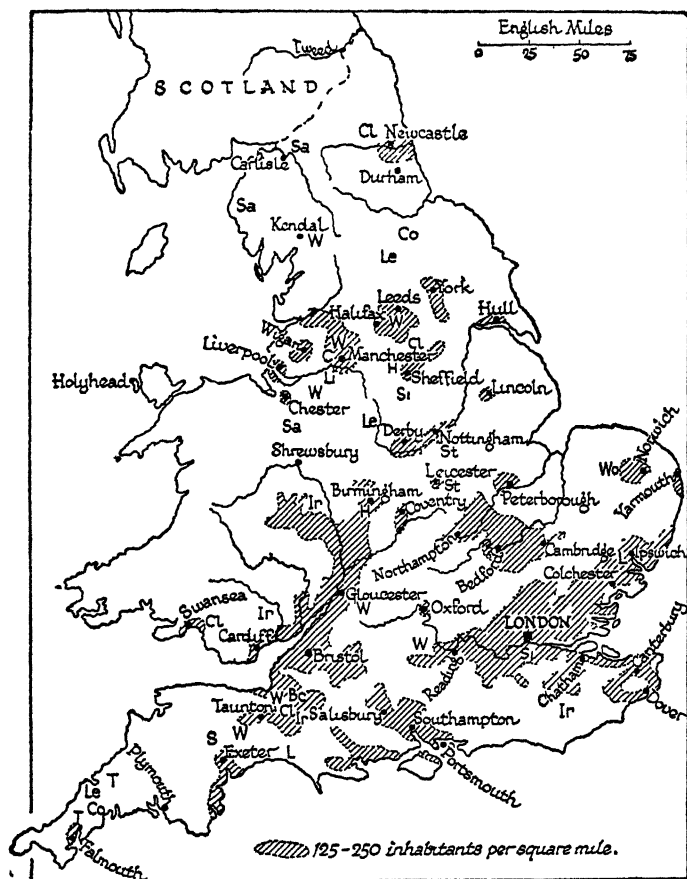


FIG 1 ENGLAND IN 1714

T=Tin	W=Wool	St=Stockings	Le=Lead
S=Serge	Ir=Iron	Bc=Broadcloth	L <sub>1</sub> =Linen
L=Lace	Wo=Worsted	S <sub>1</sub> =Silk	C=Cotton
Cl=Coal	Co=Copper	Sa=Salt	H=Hardware

## *Introduction*

But it is doubtful whether London, important as it was from the political, military and economic angle, overreached the English provincial towns as Paris did the French. Such towns retained their vigorous identity. Manchester, which housed ten thousand people, and Birmingham, which had a population of five thousand more, appeared small by the size of London, but both these towns, like the small port of Liverpool, were growing fast. The larger of the old towns, Bristol, Norwich, Gloucester, Worcester, Derby, Shrewsbury and Exeter, were still important provincial centres the influence of whose urban life was stretching far beyond their city walls. The character of their life naturally depended on the occupations of their citizens, whether the towns were ports, markets for agricultural products of the surrounding region or youthful industrial centres. In a small way they modelled London—their tall houses and narrow streets overtopped by a bevy of spires.

The industrial districts which to-day provide so much of the wealth and ugliness of modern England were things of the future, but the country was spotted by small industries which drew more and more labourers from the countryside. 'Nature,' wrote Thomas Fuller in the middle of the seventeenth century, 'intended England for the staple of Drapery,' and despite falling prices wool remained the chief source of industrial wealth. Woollen goods accounted for £2,989,163 of the total exports of £6,477,402 in 1702. It was widely established wherever its main industrial requirements, raw wool, water-power, fuel and fuller's earth, were to be found, west Yorkshire, East Anglia and south-west England were the chief centres of manufacture.

The silk industry, still largely worked by foreigners or workmen of foreign descent, was mainly concentrated in London and Kent, while Lancashire was the centre of the growing cotton industry. Other towns, lace-making at Honiton is a case in point, produced specialised types of textiles.

The country's extensive mineral wealth was only very partially exploited. The iron industry was in decline because of the shortage of wood fuel which played an essential part in its preparation,

### *Industry and Travel in 1714*

but there were still a considerable number of workers, especially in the Forest of Dean, employed in it. Lead was mined in the Derbyshire hills and in the bleak Mendips. Tin was still produced in Devon and Cornwall but the industry was of declining importance. Coal was potentially the foundation of all other industry. It was already important and was to become more and more so as the country became increasingly industrialised.

Such industries as there were employed few people in proportion to the population as a whole. Coal-mining naturally utilised a large number of workers who were in many ways isolated from the remainder of the community and formed a rather barbarous class of their own. The factory system had developed so slightly that there were very few places which employed more than a hundred workmen. It was still the normal thing for the small farmer and his labourer to supplement their earnings by weaving and spinning cloth.

Life in 1714 was thus essentially leisurely both in town and country. Society was patterned and graded and yet remained sufficiently elastic to permit a rich Dutch merchant to buy an estate and become an English noble, or a poor man's son to take orders and proceed to a fellowship and a mitre.

The difficulty of travelling across the country must partly account for this leisurely, self-sufficing way of life. Sea, river and road were the only means by which goods and passengers could be conveyed from one part of the country to the other. Since the Middle Ages and even earlier England's coastline had been dotted with ports, great and small, from which shipping proceeded in the important intercontinental and intercoastal trade. Between three and four thousand ships were employed in the coal trade alone. Since 1687 a packet ran between Harwich and Brill, helping to bring together Dutch money and English business. England was already on the verge of maritime and naval supremacy.

Rivers, too, especially in the south-east, played an important part in communications, although mills, weirs and other obstacles prevented their full use. The Thames was navigable as far as

### *Introduction*

Cricklade, while small boats sailed up the Severn to Welshpool. It has been reckoned that by the last year of George I's reign there were 1,127 miles of navigable river over which goods could be transported.

This was England in 1714, a pageant of slow-moving ships and horses, busy country markets and of a London noisy and thronged with all sorts and conditions of men, set against the reds and browns and greys of ploughed earth and the green of fields, woods and hedges. The face of England had an enduring tranquillity about it even when the country had just passed through one, and was about to begin another, period of the greatest historical importance.

## CHAPTER II

# THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

### 1. *Introduction*

Practically every educated Englishman in the eighteenth century revered the English Constitution. Even in so cosmopolitan an age when English society was as much at home in Paris as in Bath or London, the Englishman remained splendidly insular in matters of government. He had a great deal of contempt and dislike for Continental despotisms, however enlightened, and was fervently devoted to his own form of government. He cherished the respect which distinguished foreigners like Montesquieu and Voltaire showed for the English Constitution and took it as a sign of their exceptional acumen. He would in general have agreed with Burke that the English government was the most perfect form of government in existence and that it embodied, as Burke said, 'those rules of Prudence which are formed upon the known march of the ordinary Providence of God.' This classical view, much modified but certainly not dead by 1815, was best put forward in the writings of the Oxford jurist, Sir William Blackstone. In his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, he developed the thesis that the English Constitution was most in conformity with the laws of nature, and was therefore not only the most rational but also the most perfect and unalterable. 'Of a constitution, so wisely contrived, so strongly raised, and so highly finished,' he wrote, 'it is hard to speak with that praise, which is just and severely its due—the thorough and attentive contemplation of it will furnish its best panegyric'

This view, which most people accepted until the need for the reform of Parliament became strikingly obvious, was based on a



### *The English Constitution*

well-reasoned analysis of the actual form and practice of English government. England was ruled by a small class of property-owners. They believed that they had a prescriptive right to govern and that what was for the good of the governing class must by its very nature be for the good of the governed. Property was the key to government and the basis of representation in Parliament. Even those whose interests had very little in common with those of the ruling classes rarely challenged this conclusion. Reverence for men of quality was an unalienable characteristic of this great age of aristocracy, which survived, especially in country districts, well into the time of Victoria. Admiration for the English Constitution, which thus upheld the rights of the property-owners, was to some extent a rationalisation of current practice.

Yet there was something novel about this English Constitution. It was the fruit of a long struggle about the sovereign power around which a whole series of other ideas had also been grouped. Neither Charles I nor his opponents had been much concerned with what later developed into the conventions of the English Constitution. Parliamentary lawyers had referred back with considerable learning and even greater inaccuracy to medieval precedents. The King had turned back to the example of his ancestors and divine right. Neither had foreseen that in the final event the real victory lay, not with the King or Parliament, but with the landed classes. The settlement of 1689 had, however, given rise to a series of ideas which were crystallised into a philosophy of politics through the writings of John Locke.

John Locke, Christ Church don and apologist of the Revolution of 1688, was the father of eighteenth-century political beliefs. Both Whig and Tory paid homage to his ideas in a way that was sometimes unreal but often touching and filial. 'I can never thank you too much for making me study Locke,' the young Duke of Rutland wrote to his friend and adviser, the Whig Bishop Watson of Llandaff, in 1775. Both in England and in the American colonies Locke's ideas had considerable influence over constitutional development in theory and in practice.

These ideas were printed in the *First and Second Treatise on Government* which were written originally to rebuff contemporary notions about divine right. Locke held that when men were first gathered together in a 'state of nature' they recognised the natural laws of reason which sanction what is best in human conduct and civil government. As, however, there was no common superior to enforce these laws, society was subject to something approaching anarchy. To overcome these inconveniences, each individual agreed to surrender his own right to enforce his natural rights to the community as a whole. But such a surrender is conditional and limited. The community, or the sovereign representing it, has no authority to infringe the natural rights remaining to the individual nor to act in an arbitrary and uncontrolled way. The government has been instituted to perform certain specified functions, to maintain peace or protect the country through war, to dispense justice and to safeguard property. If the government neglects or dispenses with its trust or acts contrary to it, the people have power to withdraw their sanction and so dissolve the government. 'There remains,' as Locke puts it, 'still in the People a supreme power to remove or alter the Legislative, when they find the Legislative act contrary to the Trust reposed in them.'

Eighteenth-century politicians liked Locke's views, partly because they provided for a series of checks and balances well suited to the practical politics of the period, partly because his theory depended for its validity on the belief in an ultimate rule of law, and finally because it provided the ruling classes with a philosophy of politics which justified their governance. The contemporary politician could comfort himself with the knowledge that the people were theoretically the true source of authority; 'we contend,' as the Whig Bishop Watson wrote, 'that in all just government, the people have delegated to their governors the particular degree of trust with which they are invested, [and] have limited the extent of the control to which they are to be subjected' The people exercised their suffrage to elect their representatives who were naturally and implicitly conscious of

## *The English Constitution*

the fact that property was an unalienable right conferred upon man by his Creator. The community had transferred its rights to its representatives, Commons and Lords, and they in their turn controlled and checked the King, the ultimate depositary of the sovereign power. Locke's ideas interpreted by the Whig aristocrats became the bulwark of propertied conservatism, of the dominance of the landed and mercantile classes and of a general aversion to any change which might, in theory, endanger the community. Bishop Watson, who mirrors admirably the views of his contemporaries in this respect, agrees that the people might at some time exercise their right of resuming the government, but in practice, he adds, 'that is quite another question' 'It was exercised at the Revolution; and we trust that there will never, in this country, be occasion to exercise it again; for we hope, and are persuaded that the wisdom of the House of Hanover will keep at an awful distance from the throne men professing principles which have levelled with the dust the House of Stuart'

Either way, the Constitution appeared to be a masterly, practical embodiment of the rule of law which dates from and before the beginning of time. Executive, legislature and judiciary worked together for the good of the whole community and to the admiration of enlightened foreigners. It was folly indeed to tamper with so well-balanced, so progressive and yet so traditional a method of government. Even the smoke of the Napoleonic Wars did not wholly obliterate this notion, for did not Wellington, on the eve of parliamentary reform, argue that the Constitution could not possibly be improved? 'I never read or heard of any measure up to the present moment which in and degree satisfied my mind that the state of the representation can be improved' These words, spoken by the Duke on the eve of his resignation in 1830, would have been acclaimed by the vast mass of his compatriots throughout the previous century, whether Whig or Tory.

## *George I*

### *2 The Royal Family*

The King was still the real as well as the titular head of the State. It is a mistake to imagine that the arrival of George I was followed by a complete and dramatic abdication of the royal power. Society continued to revolve around the Court or the Court of the heir, and that society formed the core of the governing class. The personality of the monarch who headed society and the nation played then a considerable part in the history of England under the Hanoverians.

George I (1714-1727) was by no means an attractive man, but there was a shrewdness, a sense of courage and even of duty which calls forth admiration. His father, Ernest Augustus, was a typically ambitious German prince, principally interested in extending the power of his own family. His mother, Sophia, grand-daughter of James I of England, was a cultured and witty grand-dame, who had been much attracted by the prospect of ascending the English throne. Their son, George Lewis, was heavy and solid with a slow but rather shrewd and direct mind. He had been married, by his father's wish, to his German cousin, Sophia Dorothea of Celle, because the marriage would occasion a further accession of territory to Hanover. The match was unhappy and the bride was unfaithful; her lover, Count Königsmark, so rumour asserted, was arrested, murdered and immured beneath the floor of one of the rooms of the royal palace. The unhappy woman herself remained in close confinement, dying in 1726 without ever visiting the country of which she was the rightful Queen. For what could be condoned in a sovereign was condemned in his wife. George followed princely precedent by comforting himself with a bevy of rather unattractive German *fraus*, two of whom were appropriately if contemptuously dubbed by his new subjects, for obvious reasons, the elephant (Baroness Kielmansegge) and the maypole (Baroness von Schulenburg).

George I was fifty-four when he became King of England. He could not speak English and never bothered to learn it. He had spent all his life, apart from courageous and able work as a

## *The English Constitution*

soldier in the Imperial armies, within the restricted but comfortable autocracy of the small principality of Hanover where he had been ruling for the past sixteen years. Excepting his not uncommon matrimonial difficulties, his life had so far proved uneventful and prosperous. He had no particular wish to become King of England and had there been the least sign of any real resistance he would have stayed in his beloved palace of Herrenhausen. It is therefore all the more creditable that he acted wisely and shrewdly in an environment towards which he was obviously unsympathetic and of which he understood very little. The thirteen years of his reign proved a successful opening to the Hanoverian era. The credit for this must to some degree be given to the King himself.

The successor to this shrewd and selfish prince was his elder son, forty-four-year-old George II (1727-1760). The new King had his virtues and, though never popular with his people, guided the country well. He was as much in love with Hanover as his father but he understood England better, even though he deplored English ways. He was of short stature, a brave soldier (and displayed himself as such at Dettingen for all the elder Pitt's sneers), faithful in his friendships if not in his affections, and yet withal a conceited bore, choleric, humourless, without learning or taste, intensely self-centred. But he absorbed good advice from the Queen and from his ministers and as long as it appeared to be his own opinion advanced it again for the general good. For all his defects, he seems to have had the good of his country at heart, and his thirty-three years' reign did much to establish the Hanoverians firmly on the English throne.

His wife, Caroline of Anspach, whose death in 1737 was a grievous personal and political blow, was an outstanding woman and the real power behind the throne. George II was extremely unwilling to admit it, but public opinion had seized on the truth:

You may strut, dapper George, but 'twill all be in vain,  
We know 'tis Queen Caroline, not you, that reign—  
You govern no more than Don Philip of Spain  
Then if you would have us fall down and adore you  
Lock up your fat spouse, as your dad did afore you.

## *George II and Queen Caroline*

Her friend and bitter confidant, John, Lord Hervey, wrote equally truly that 'as soon as ever the Prince became King the whole world began to find out that her will was the sole spring on which every movement in the Court turned, and though His Majesty lost no opportunity to declare that the Queen never meddled with his business, yet nobody was simple enough to believe it. Her power was unrivalled and unbounded. She managed this deified image as the heathen priests used to do the oracles of old, when, kneeling and prostrate before the altars of a pagan god, they received with the greatest devotion and reverence those directions in public which they had before instilled and regulated in private.' In another place the envenomed pen of the Lord Chamberlain asserted that 'For all the tedious hours she spent then in watching him while he slept, or the heavier task of entertaining him while he was awake, her single consolation was in reflecting she had power, and that people in coffee-houses and ruelles were saying she governed the country without knowing how dear the government of it cost her.' Caroline was an intelligent, cultured German princess who loved writing voluminous letters and discussing metaphysics with scholars and literary men. If she could escape the deadly boredom of her husband's company, she liked nothing better than to talk about theology with the more unorthodox divines of the day or politics with her great friend, Sir Robert Walpole. But she was no 'blue-stocking', her conversation was often strong and even indelicate. Yet she had a great deal of political wisdom and her friendship with Walpole was the cornerstone of the structure of government in the first decade of her husband's reign.

The aged King's successor—George II outlived his wife by twenty-three years—was his twenty-two-year-old grandson, George III (1760–1820). The chief influence in his early life was his mother, the widowed Princess Augusta of Wales, a strongish-minded woman whom Horace Walpole and a great many historians after him regarded incorrectly as the evil genius of the reign. Important surface changes in George's character took place during his long reign, but fundamentally he remained

### *The English Constitution*

much the same, though naturally greatly more experienced, until his final mental breakdown compelled him to retire from active participation in the government. His opponents denounced him as a would-be autocrat, obstinately despotic, but, excepting his obstinacy, they quite wrongly misinterpreted both his character and ambitions. Far more English than either of the two previous Kings, he was the first German king to reign over both countries without ever visiting Hanover. He understood the English Constitution better and had far greater reverence for English constitutional ideas than his two predecessors. Hence the conflict between the King and his opponents which gave rise to so inaccurate an interpretation of the King's objects.

George was a curious combination of inherited shrewdness and a neurosis which eventually led to insanity. He was far from devoid of intelligence, and was soon politically experienced, but his judgments were often naïve and unstable. He was personally much more attractive than the past two Kings. Fanny Burney, who came to know both George and his wife very well, could never speak too highly of the royal couple. His tastes were simple and, by comparison with the sophistication of his noble-born subjects, almost commonplace. He disliked Shakespeare. He enjoyed sea-bathing, strolling down the steps of his machine at Weymouth to the tune of 'Rule Britannia'. He was genuinely pious, not unwilling to rebuke an Archbishop for secular-minded revels at Lambeth Palace. He was an affectionate husband and a good father, even to a rather undutiful son. As a King he may well have been less wise than he was as a man, but the real significance of the part he played in the history of his times is only now being slowly revealed.

The Queen, Charlotte, was a German princess who played a small part in the politics of the reign. She is represented in Fanny Burney's memoirs as kindly and thoughtful, but at a later date, if we may trust the correspondence of her own children, she became petulant and tyrannical. She remained loyally devoted to her unfortunate husband, but a curious streak of cruelty made her thwart her daughters at every turn, particularly

### George IV

where their marriage projects were concerned. On the whole, she and the King made Windsor Castle upright, honest and domestic, if appallingly dull, and to a greater extent than any of the other Hanoverians prepared England for the virtues of the Victorian era.

Their son and successor, George IV, who ruled England from 1812 to 1830, first as Regent and then (from 1820) as King, was more typically Hanoverian. Personally affectionate, particularly towards his rather unfortunate sisters, and with some ability, he attained an unenviable reputation as a rake and, for all his flirting with the Whig party, as a political reactionary. He may have had more virtues than some historians have been willing to give him, but he was none the less intensely and purposely selfish. Leigh Hunt, the radical writer, was imprisoned in 1812 for describing him in the *Examiner* as a 'violinist of his word, a libertine . . . a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demi-reps'. The truth of this so-called libel was unquestionable. This epitome of the fashionable world had little respect for the marriage tie, piled up debts which he did not pay, gambled and dined in a typically classical manner. He was not devoid of understanding of political or diplomatic matters, but he saw that the interests of the monarchy, which were in fact his own interests, demanded that he should oppose all political and social change. In other circumstances, in an environment less florid and more responsive to his perpetual ennui, George might have been a better man and a more successful Regent and King.

These royal portraits would be incomplete if the hostility of father and son, which was a marked feature of the history of the whole period, was not mentioned. 'It ran,' says Horace Walpole, 'a little in the blood of the family to hate the eldest son,' but such ill-feeling was doubtless deliberately fostered by the opposition party for their own ends and was not purely a peculiar characteristic of the Hanoverian royal family. George I loathed and detested his heir, possibly because his son reminded him of the wife whom he had so long incarcerated in his castle of Ahlden. In their turn George II and Queen Caroline both vented all their



### *The English Constitution*

spleen on Frederick, Prince of Wales. Court and society were split into two factions, Walpole's opponents supporting young Fritz and the government his parents. 'Poor' Fred's death in 1751 was one of the reasons why George III was placed in so strong a political position at the beginning of his reign. But the curse descended on George III when his son too came of age. What Leicester House had been to Frederick, Prince of Wales, Carlton House was to the future George IV and the opponents of the younger Pitt. This conflict had profound social and political consequences, for the close association between the heir to the throne and the self-interested clique of politicians, desirous of office and the rewards which it brought with it, had an important bearing upon constitutional development and the growth of the party system.

This survey may well have left the impression that the Hanoverians were not glamorous personalities. They were certainly less impressive and less attractive than the majority of the Tudors and Stuarts, but they lacked neither ability nor even a sense of responsibility. They were an able line and played a leading part in the history of their times.

### *3. The powers of the Crown*

The settlement of 1689 had made Parliament the final arbiter in the government of the country, but it had not denuded the Crown of all the powers which previous Kings possessed. The Civil War of the seventeenth century had resulted in a compromise in which a curious hybrid, the King in Parliament, was the constitutional victor. The eighteenth century, and the early years of the following century, witnessed a gradual reduction of the royal power and yet, even as late as 1815, it exerted considerable force in the government of the country.

Throughout the period the King was and has since continued to be the leader of Society. This in itself gave him a great deal of influence. The knowledge that the King regarded this or that

### *The Royal 'Influence'*

policy with favour, that he had no time for Lord X or Mr. Y, that he would prefer this or that party in power, made other leaders of Society follow his example. Thus in 1821 George IV successfully refused to accept George Canning as a minister, though he was obliged to yield the next year. Or again, the general election of 1784, which resulted in so striking a defeat for the younger Pitt's political opponents, could not have been won if the King's express wish had not been widely known. There were other occasions, for instance the Crown's opposition to Roman Catholic Emancipation, when an expression of the royal wishes had political importance.

The royal 'influence,' which Burke attacked with such vigour in his *Present Discontents* in 1770, may be more easily defined and was no less powerful. The King possessed the right to appoint to a series of offices with which he could reward his faithful followers, including posts in the royal household and government sinecures, deaneries, canonries and livings. Thirty or more Treasury boroughs were directly in his hands. Pensions on the Civil List, the reward of peerages which was used extensively in the latter part of George III's reign, were all useful hooks with which the fish were only too eager to be caught. This influence was so successfully wielded that it has been stated that the 'Hanoverian Kings never failed to carry a general election,' and that no one of their ministers had to face a continuously hostile House of Commons. In the first half of the century the ministers who had the King's favour wielded this vast system of patronage. George III took back a great deal into his own hands with the result that the Whig peers, with whom the patronage had so long rested, set up a howl of disgust and denounced their sovereign as a calculating despot.

Constitutional usage also bestowed on the King other ways by which he could exert great influence over the affairs of the country. There was, as George III saw, no need to tamper with constitutional procedure. Neither of the first two Georges had properly understood the extent of their own power. They constantly lamented the autocratic powers which they enjoyed as Electors

### *The English Constitution*

of Hanover, but the Crown's privileges under the Constitution remained considerable. The King still appointed to all ministerial offices, a fact that is sometimes forgotten because the Whigs' long tenure of office between 1714 and 1760 made it appear that the 'spoils' of office were less dependent on the King than they really were. Even Walpole's power in the last resort depended on the royal will as the curious little farce played out in 1727 very clearly revealed. When he became King, George II, associating Walpole with the father whom he hated, decided to replace the great minister by the nincompoopish Sir Spencer Compton. Walpole's fate lay in the balance until the King realised, largely through the pressure of Queen Caroline, that Compton was incompetent (he had even asked his rival to write the accession speech) and that Walpole's interests (he had just appealed to the King's avarice by promising to increase the royal revenue) were the interests of the dynasty. What was true of Walpole was equally true of all his successors. Every government depended for its eventual success upon royal approval, for the King had the right to appoint or to dismiss, or even by the expression of his opinion to ruin, ministries of which he disapproved.

Each individual minister in his turn thought of himself as more responsible to the King than to the party he represented or even to his other colleagues in the Cabinet. There was as yet no real notion of ministerial responsibility or ministerial solidarity. Each individual minister realised that the King had appointed him to carry out the royal policy, whether this was, as with the first two Georges, the policy of a party or, as with George III, something more personal.

The King also had full control over the armed forces. Both George I and George II had shown courage in the field, and, even if they had a magnified idea of their own military ability, they took their duties as Commander-in-Chief seriously. The Army itself still existed by the will of Parliament, but as no one seriously thought of doing away with it, royal control was practically unchallenged. The Navy was, like the Army, under

### *The ' Pensioner of his People '*

the King's final control, and the naval officers were loyally conservative in temper and idea

Finally the King had complete control over the moneys which Parliament granted him at the beginning of his reign. He could dispose of this for pensions if he thought fit or in any other manner which would increase the royal power and dignity. During the course of every reign the King ran up debts on the Civil List which Parliament had eventually to pay. The opposition party, in close contact with the heir to the throne, criticised the royal freedom in this respect, but every attempt which the Commons made, especially after Walpole's resignation in 1742, to investigate the details of the Civil List was defeated until 1780

All this does not mean that the King's power was autocratic or despotic; it was purely constitutional and in accord with past tradition. Each successive George, mindful of Hanoverian ways, grumbled at the limitation of his authority. George I summed up the situation by saying ' This is a strange country. The first morning after my arrival at St James's, I looked out of my window and saw a park with walls and a canal which they told me was mine. The next day Lord Chetwynd, the manager of my park, sent me a fine brace of carp out of *my* canal, and I was told I must give five guineas to Lord Chetwynd's servant for bringing me my own carp out of my own canal in my own park. ' Queen Caroline exclaimed trenchantly that her husband was the ' humble servant of the Parliament, the pensioner of his people and a puppet sovereign that was forced to go to them for every shilling he wanted, that was obliged to court those who were always abusing him, and could do nothing of himself ' George III, more aware of English tradition, grumbled far less, but he too found that his subjects were only too frequently obstructionist.

In reality the royal power was gradually declining. The King had no need to choose ministers who represented the dominant party in the Commons but he found that it was more and more expedient to do so. On at least two occasions George II failed to obtain the ministry he wanted and was obliged, in 1745-46 and in 1756-57, to fall back on ministers whose resignation he had

## *The English Constitution*

accepted or whom he positively disliked. George III was faced with the same experience until he brought the more congenial Lord North into power.

There were many reasons why the royal power should steadily grow less. The parliamentary inexperience of George I and George II certainly weakened their position, and the formation of an influential group around the heir to the throne strengthened the parliamentary opposition. Latterly Cabinet solidarity and George III's withdrawal from public affairs on grounds of health helped to shift some of the power which the King possessed to the Prime Minister. The gradual development of an educated public opinion, welded together by an increasingly important if as yet politically irresponsible press, was another reason why royal control began to languish.

And yet—the point requires emphasis—the King in Parliament, a Parliament which he summoned and dissolved and whose bills did not have the force of law until he appended his royal signature to them, ruled the country, he was far more than the titular head whom men still continue to respect and admire but whose powers have been steadily reduced in the past one hundred and fifty years.

### *4. The Cabinet and the Prime Minister*

The Cabinet, acting in co-operation with the King and Parliament, ruled the country. During the eighteenth century it developed from misty and obscure beginnings towards something bearing some resemblance to the modern Cabinet, but even by 1815 there still remained important differences in method and procedure. It had originated as an informal body of advisers whom the King—in this case Charles II—chose from the Privy Council for consultation about business which the King wished to have conducted secretly and efficiently. By Anne's reign, the Cabinet had fixed duties and met regularly. The King, or in Anne's case the Queen, often presided over its deliberations which dealt with all the activities of the State. The more

### *King and Cabinet*

important ministers were already members of the Cabinet. There was another important development in Anne's reign typical of Cabinet history, that is, the partitioning of the Cabinet into an outer or full Cabinet and an inner or more confidential Cabinet. But the distinction between the Committee of Council and the Cabinet was still very blurred in Anne's day.

The Cabinet began to take its present shape under the Hanoverians. Various factors resulted in a real increase in its powers. As the interests of the monarch and the party in power were practically coterminous, the Whig party remained in office until the accession of George III in 1760. It was only natural that the Cabinet as the spearhead of the party, organising its members in Parliament and moulding policy, should gradually increase in importance. Although George I could speak no English<sup>1</sup> and his successor spoke it with an atrocious accent, this does not adequately explain their absence from Cabinet meetings, with very few exceptions, after 1717. Neither King bothered to preside over Cabinet meetings because they were far more interested in the decisions reached by the Cabinet than in the discussions which took place there.

The Cabinet still remained by modern standards of government singularly amorphous and inchoate. It had very little sense of collective responsibility, while there were signs, revealed in the writings of Lords Hardwicke and Hervey, of a further proliferation, of the formation of another inner circle to discuss more confidential matters which had been occasioned, in 1739-41, by the exigencies of the war situation. Much later Lord Shelburne told Jeremy Bentham that the Cabinet consisted of an outer Cabinet, membership of which was purely honorary, and an inner Cabinet, the members of which had access to State papers. The former, titular Cabinet eventually disappeared altogether; the last occasion on which it was probably called together was in 1806. The effective Cabinet, which survived, was composed of all the leading ministers and transacted all Cabinet business.

<sup>1</sup> George I had a working knowledge of French, he conversed with Walpole in Latin.

## *The English Constitution*

Important developments which anticipated the formation of a modern Cabinet took place in the ministry of the younger Pitt. His long tenure of office and the King's dwindling control over the government's policy gave the Cabinet, now limited in number to the heads of departments, a greater appearance of unity than it had had in any previous administration.

Who were the members of this 'inner' or real Cabinet? The whole question is obscure, but various incidents reveal a growing crystallisation of form. Various supernumerary members like the Archbishop of Canterbury (who last attended a Cabinet meeting in 1763), the Lord Chamberlain, the Master of the Horse and the Lord Chief Justice, no longer attended Cabinet meetings; another example of the same trend is revealed by the King's refusal to permit Lord Loughborough to continue as a member of the Cabinet in 1801 after he had resigned the Lord Chancellorship. By 1815 the Cabinet consisted purely of the leading officers of the Government.

The leading minister usually presided over Cabinet meetings. Although the office of Prime Minister was as yet unknown to law, the general public had bestowed the title on the apparent head of every government, and primarily, but by no means consistently, on the First Lord of the Treasury. We should, however, be creating an entirely false impression if we did not qualify this statement by saying that no minister in the eighteenth century held any office which corresponded in power or importance with the modern office of Prime Minister. The office grew up in an even more haphazard fashion than the Cabinet itself.

Walpole has been acclaimed as the first Prime Minister, but the title had actually been used to describe Anne's leading minister, 'little' Sidney Godolphin. Walpole's own predominance was the result of a series of accidents. His own dislike of rivals and their successive resignations, the King's absence from Cabinet meetings,<sup>1</sup> his long tenure of office, all tended to

<sup>1</sup> George II occasionally attended Cabinet meetings, both as Regent during his father's absence in Hanover, and after he had become King. George III twice presided (in 1779 and 1781) over a meeting of the Cabinet.

### *The Principal Minister*

create the impression that the minister was very much more than *primus inter pares*. This cannot be denied, but even so, all these characteristics added together do not constitute a Prime Minister. Walpole's position, like that of the elder Pitt a few years later, was the result of his own dominant personality which made him stand head and shoulders above his rivals and forced the Cabinet (in 1730 for instance) to a semblance of collective responsibility. In other ways, his powers were neither greater nor less than those enjoyed by his predecessors or his immediate successors in office, he did not choose his colleagues nor did they resign when he went out of office.

This is equally true of all his successors. In some cases, it is not even clear who was the accepted principal minister. The elder Pitt, of whom Newcastle complained that 'he will be Treasury, Secretary, General and Admiral,' held his position because of his obvious talents and the force of his personality. But his colleagues resented his dominance increasingly, there was no unanimity about Cabinet decisions, and when he resigned in 1761 the only one of his colleagues, all of whom were directly appointed by the King, to resign with him was his brother-in-law, Lord Temple. Lord North, whose tenure of office may be compared with the tenure enjoyed by Walpole and the younger Pitt, on the other hand, was far more a court favourite than a chief minister.

The ministry of the younger Pitt in this as in other matters marked important developments. His Cabinet acted together as a single unit far more successfully than any earlier Cabinet had done, principally because Pitt had the loyalty and support of his colleagues. When Henry Addington suggested to Pitt in 1803 that they might both hold office with dual powers, neither minister actually being called Prime Minister, Pitt replied, through his intermediary Dundas, that it was 'an absolute necessity in the conduct of the affairs of this country that there should be an avowed and real Minister, possessing the chief weight in the Council and the principal place in the confidence of the King.' Pitt's powers were still limited by royal control, as



## *The English Constitution*

for instance over the question of Roman Catholic Emancipation, but circumstances played into the minister's hands and made him far more of a chief minister than any of his predecessors.

There were developments to confirm this trend in the next three decades. Lord Liverpool's long tenure of office from 1812 to 1827 and his masterly control over Cabinet meetings did something further to establish the First Lord's claim to be Prime Minister, while the King, still powerful, as George IV showed himself to be in 1830, withdrew further from the actual control of policy. It is true that he still intervened over individual questions, but the Crown was more and more elbowed out from the position it had held in the previous century. The great growth in the volume of business and the administration's increased responsibility to Parliament were other factors which made the office of Prime Minister and the form of the Cabinet correspond more closely to their modern equivalents.

The Secretaries of State were the most important members of the Cabinet after the First Lord of the Treasury. There were two Secretaries during the greater part of the eighteenth century who dealt with every conceivable department of administration except finance. The Secretary for the South controlled all the diplomatic correspondence with British representatives in western and southern Europe, his authority also ran in the British colonies, in Ireland and the Channel Islands. The Secretaryship of the North, partly because of the Hanoverian connection, was thought to be the more important; thus Stanhope exchanged the Southern for the Northern Department after his victory over Townshend in 1716. Newcastle chose the North in 1748 as did Holderness in 1754. The elder Pitt tried unsuccessfully to get it in 1756. The Secretary for the Northern Department controlled business with the Empire, Holland, the Scandinavian countries, Poland and Russia. Both Secretaries dealt with questions entailing an incredible variety of business affecting the internal administration of the country.

In practice one Secretary was nearly always more important, personally, than the other and dominated his colleague's policy.

### *The Secretaries*

Pitt, holding the less important office of Southern Secretary, virtually controlled the policy of his colleague of the Northern Department, the aristocratic Holderness. This rivalry, which sometimes led, as in George III's reign, to the appointment of comparative mediocrities to both posts, was one of the reasons why the leadership of the Cabinet was vested more and more in the First Lord of the Treasury.

There were normally only two Secretaries until 1782, but for a short time there was a Secretary for Scotland (1709-25 and 1742-46) and a Secretary for the Colonies (1768-82). The Secretary at War, probably in the seventeenth century the personal secretary of the Commander-in-Chief, was a subordinate officer who was not even entitled to membership of the Cabinet, but his growing control over all military questions naturally gave him increasing importance.

This system was changed in 1782 when George III agreed, at the behest of Parliament, to abolish the Secretaryship for the Colonies and to divide its duties between the two remaining Secretaries. Henceforth one was to be responsible for domestic and colonial affairs while the other dealt with foreign business. This event marked the beginning of a process which led eventually to the creation of the modern Secretaryships.

The development of the Cabinet, and of the various officials who were its leading members, is exceedingly obscure and intricate, but this brief survey will have shown that the Hanoverian period of English history was a critical period in the evolution of one of the most important aspects of the British Constitution.

### *5. Parliament. Lords and Commons*

The prestige of Parliament, for all the insufficiencies which steadily became more apparent as the century grew older, remained remarkably high throughout the period. It was the outward and visible sign of the much-vaunted Constitution, the controller of the royal power, the representative institution of the

## *The English Constitution*

nation, the law-maker and the final court of law. Eighteenth-century politicians, who took their duties seriously in a leisurely kind of way, were as impressed as visiting foreigners with the powers, privileges and functions of the two Houses

The House of Lords was far more important than its modern descendant and still retained considerable powers. It could turn out bills which the Commons had passed and did so with impunity. The Lords also formed the supreme Court of Appeal and were thus the ultimate guardians of the country's laws. The House consisted of the spiritual and temporal peers of the realm. The twenty-six bishops, headed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, normally voted for the government which had appointed them, but there were revolts on occasions. Under Walpole's 'pope,' Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, the Episcopal bench very nearly became a phalanx of the Whig party, but later it reverted to its more motley complexion. Great lords like Newcastle expected their episcopal nominees to write and speak on the government's behalf and to use whatever influence they possessed in their dioceses to the same effect. The very wide disparity in income between the various sees and the wish for preferment made the more materially minded of the bishops follow political questions with a good deal of subservience. The remaining peers were more sharply divided, they provided both the leading members of the government and the opposition.

Although the majority of the ministers was drawn from the ranks of the peerage, it is probable that the upper House was more influential outside than inside Parliament. As the leading representatives of the landed interest, they controlled a great many elections to the lower House. If there were some poor men in their ranks, the leading members of the nobility enjoyed a vast income—the Duke of Sutherland, in the third decade of the nineteenth century, owned 1,400,000 acres of Scotland—and often spent it as freely as it came. The eighth Earl of Lichfield, who enjoyed an inherited income of £70,000 a year, ruined himself by gambling. New creations, especially at the end of the century, somewhat modified the social complexion of the peerage,

### *The House of Lords*

but in general it continued to represent the landed interest, and that alone, until the closing decades of the nineteenth century. The younger Pitt's creations added greatly to the number of peers. The abolition of the sinecures with which political services had hitherto been rewarded, through the Economical Reform Act of 1782, was probably the principal reason for the new 'surfeit' of peers. But there is some truth in Disraeli's statement that the House of Lords had been 'strengthened by the accession of some of the best blood, the greatest wealth, and the most distinguished talent, of the community, and its due influence alike in the legislature and in national opinion has thus been efficiently maintained.'

The Lords certainly formed a very representative group throughout the period. Even in politics they did not form a necessarily homogeneous whole. The wealthy fifth Duke of Bedford carried on the unconventional political record of his family, before and since that time, by actively sympathising with the French Revolution. There were rakes like the Duke of Queensberry, mad eccentrics like Pitt's cousin, Lord Camelford, and dandies like Lord Alvanley. At the other end of the picture, there was the banker Robert Smith, whom George III had rather reluctantly created Baron Carrington, the evangelical Earl of Dartmouth, who patronised the poet Cowper, the artistically minded Earl of Egremont; the seventh Earl of Elgin, who brought the famous marbles from the Parthenon at Athens at the beginning of the nineteenth century at a cost of £74,000. Nor was the list wanting in scientists, classical scholars and agronomes. The introduction of progressive methods in agriculture owed much to the interest and patronage of the nobility.

Despite these variations in rank, origin, taste, wealth and politics, the British aristocracy formed a well-defined class of society whose privileges and powers were confirmed in the House of Lords. As late as 1815 they still regarded themselves as the social cream of the country and as men who had a natural right to govern the masses. The novelist Thackeray commented in 1847 that England was a 'country where Lordolatry is part of

### *The English Constitution*

our creed, and where our children are brought up to respect the Peerage as the Englishman's second Bible' Pitt, no less than Burke or Fox or any other representative politician of the age, was fully convinced of the important position which the House of Lords occupied in the Constitution. 'It was,' he said, 'the essential link that held the branches together, and gave stability and strength to the whole, aristocracy reflected lustre on the crown, and lent support and effect to the democracy, while the democracy gave vigour and energy to both, and the sovereignty crowned the constitution with authority and dignity.' Perhaps there were more critics of this belief after the French Revolution than before it, but however loud the individual voices raised in protest, they did very little to mute the generally accepted opinion that the nobility formed part of the established order.

The reputation and actual power of the Commons were increasing fast. Indirectly, the Lords exerted great influence over the elections to the House of Commons and, through the ministerial offices held by individual peers, over the actual government of the country, but even so stalwart a defender of the old order as the Duke of Wellington exclaimed in 1809 'Nobody cares a damn about the House of Lords, the House of Commons is everything in England and the House of Lords is nothing.' This is an exaggerated statement, but it suggests correctly that the House of Commons was becoming more and more important. Membership of Parliament was now a cherished distinction to which all young men of ability and talent aspired.

The Lower House was numerically larger than the Upper House and socially more representative, but, having said that, it should be added that it was equally concerned with the possession of land and property. The 558 members of Parliament (with an additional hundred from the Irish constituencies after 1801) included forty-five representatives from Scotland, about a hundred county members and a majority of borough members. Landed property was the predominant interest; all members had to possess assured incomes (in the case of a county member £600 from land, in the case of a borough member £300) before they

## *The House of Commons*

took their seats. Although there were ways and means of evading these qualifications, they illustrate the continued emphasis placed on property. But lists of members of the Commons from 1714 to 1832 suggest that trade and commerce—there was latterly a very large East India Company interest and there were other members who had obligations to protect the South Sea Company or the West Indian planters—as well as banking, the armed forces, and the law, were all represented to an increasing degree.

The members represented both the counties and the boroughs, but in view of their greater freedom from the charge of corruption county membership was the more cherished. There were also fewer county seats. Everyone who, by the law of 1430, possessed freehold property worth forty shillings a year had the right to elect county members, Yorkshire, as the biggest county, had 16,000 voters and Rutland, as the smallest, 600. Although it was held that the county members were more truly representative of the country than the borough members, their decisions were swayed by the same motives and formed by similar influences. Corruption may quite possibly have played a smaller part in a county election, but the costs of the election were often very considerable, and the influence of the great landed families was certainly no less.

When we come to the representatives of the boroughs who made up the majority of the House of Commons, we are at once faced with a startling variety in the method of election and in the degree of representation. The right to vote very largely depended on medieval precedent and custom. Thus, in the 'potwalloper' borough, each man who was master of a fireplace where he could cook, or who controlled a doorway, had the right to vote. In other places the right of voting depended upon the payment of 'scot and lot' or certain other local taxes or on membership of the local corporation, often in itself rife with corruption. Burgage tenure, depending on the possession of a certain house, was another much-valued qualification. Thus, Haslemere was a constituency where the right to vote depended on the possession of certain burgage tenures; it was controlled by the powerful

## *The English Constitution*

Lord Lonsdale who used to settle a number of his Cumberland miners in the houses, which gave the right to vote and which he owned, on condition that they voted for his nominee. Similarly, the Earl of Radnor owned ninety-nine of the one hundred burgage tenures of the Wiltshire constituency of Downton, 'one of the properties that gave a vote was in the middle of the water-course.' In other places, the right to vote went with membership of the local municipal corporation, in some cases a very small body and in others very large. Thus, there were six voters at Rye (while the Act of 1782, which disqualified various officials from voting, left the Cornish borough of Bossiney with one voter) by comparison with six thousand at Bristol and twelve thousand in the City of London. Naturally, the cost of trying to manipulate such an election could be very great; Lord Penrhyn spent £30,000 in 1790 in an unsuccessful attempt to control Liverpool, where 1,967 freemen had the right to vote. Other elections were far more costly

The corruption which must be associated with parliamentary elections in the eighteenth century was found most frequently in the boroughs. The smallness of the electorate—only twenty-two boroughs had more than a thousand, and some thirty-three over five hundred voters—gave the local landowner or political 'boss' an admirable opportunity to arrange the election in favour of his candidate. Control over the boroughs was, however, no less varied than the suffrage itself. The Crown had little direct control, but certain government departments, the Treasury and the Admiralty in particular, were able to influence the decision in various boroughs where they traditionally possessed considerable power. In some cases, boroughs were bought and sold, sometimes through advertisements in the newspapers, as if they were real property. For it was the property-owners who exercised the greatest control: the Duke of Newcastle in Sussex and Nottingham, the Beauforts and Berkeleys in Gloucester, the Lonsdales in Westmorland, the Duke of Rutland in Cambridgeshire, and so on. What rivalry there was cannot be defined as the antagonism of people and vested interest as much as the

### *Corrupt Influences*

competition between the great Whig and Tory families, each wielding what influence they could in their own particular locality

Eighteenth-century political corruption has been often misunderstood. It was not until the turn of the century and the initial permeation of public opinion with more democratic ideas that corruption was attacked because it made nonsense of representative institutions. Earlier attacks had all, or nearly all, been founded on the selfish tactics of a political opposition which would have been only too ready to use the same means of corruption had they, too, had the opportunity. Such corruption as there was undoubtedly exerted an unfortunate influence over political life and tended to make nonsense of such democratic claims as were put forward from time to time on Parliament's behalf. But the influence so wielded did not offend the aristocratic conscience of eighteenth-century England, since it rested on the widely accepted theory that land was really what counted, and that a constituency was as much a piece of real property as any landed estate. Without in any degree justifying the corrupt influences in eighteenth-century parliamentary life, it must at least be acknowledged that their effects were far less detrimental than some historians have asserted.

Again, the control which the patron exercised over his newly elected members was often purposely elastic. Many young men who later achieved fame as statesmen entered Parliament through a rotten or pocket borough and, though they often exchanged their constituency as soon as they had an opportunity, their patrons usually gave them a free rein to act as they liked, only insisting that they should not oppose their patron's party on fundamentals. It is true that some patrons were more peremptory than others, but in general the relationship between the patron and the member of parliament seems to have been courteous and discreet. Nor were the electors within the boroughs entirely subservient. Quite frequently they only agreed to cast their votes in the way that was required after considerable haggling and bargaining. Thus, at Ilchester in 1709, the sitting members



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ordered two thousand pairs of shoes from the local shoemakers. At Tewkesbury in 1754 some of the electors agreed to vote for the candidates who would promise to get the roads repaired. And there are many other examples

The eighteenth-century Parliament was thus primarily aristocratic and probably overridden by the conscious and unconscious interests of a particular class; 'men of property in Estates and Trade,' as a contemporary put it, 'ever did and ever' would 'choose the Parliaments of England.' But this does not mean that the parliamentarians never consulted the national interest or that their interests were always purely selfish. That they were unpaid and that some of them suffered loss of great fortunes in the game of politics is suggestive of this. The maintenance of parliamentary privilege, even in the Wilkes' case to the extent of damaging public interests, was another sign of Parliament's vitality. All told, the eighteenth-century House of Commons was a vigorous and interesting assembly, closely representative of the governing classes and yet not unaware of the country's needs

### *6. The party system*

The party system developed in the course of the eighteenth century, but we should be very careful of the use which we make of this word. For party in its full sense conveys the impression of a distinct group, closely allied together to obtain certain common objects and adhering to a common policy. It further implies acceptance of a common leader, loyalty to a common code and some form of organisation and discipline. The word can only be used very dubiously even in the nineteenth century. In the earlier century, by 'party' we mean something singularly amorphous and most difficult to define. 'I have had frequent opportunity of conversing with people of the first condition,' wrote Daniel Defoe, 'no one (worthy to be thought a statesman) has really been either Whig or Tory, or governed in the least by the principles of such, according to the common acceptance of them.'

## *Whig and Tory*

How were the words 'Whig' and 'Tory' defined by contemporaries? Contemporaries' writings, polemical in character, unquestionably recognised the existence of two parties, Whig and Tory. While they admitted that parties were relatively new, originating in fact in the discord of the Civil War and of the period which followed, men of the eighteenth century attached ideas of fundamental importance to each party. The welter of pamphlets, charges and counter-charges to which party government gave rise provide us with some idea of what contemporaries believed the words Whig and Tory to mean.

The Tory, as it seemed to his Whig opponents, was a thorough-going supporter of the Crown and the Church as by law established. Dean Swift, himself a prominent Tory pamphleteer, described the orthodox Whig view of the Tories in an article in the *Examiner*. The Tories accepted divine right, 'a King holding his power only from God, is only answerable to him' and 'is above all law,' and the idea of passive obedience. 'God will indeed call him [i.e. the King] to a severe account, but the whole people, united to a man, cannot presume to hold his hands, or offer him the least active disobedience; the people were certainly created for him, and not he for the people.'

The Tory account of what the Whigs believed was equally garbled. If the Whigs charged the Tories with supporting despotism in Church and State, they themselves were accused of propagating republicanism and nonconformity. The Whigs, wrote a Tory contemporary, 'are real Republicans desirous of taking all authority and power from the Sovereign, leaving him no more rights than are allowed to a Doge of Venice.'

Although contemporaries' observations on the meaning of party are not to be trusted, a rough and ready division can be made between the Whig and Tory parties. The Tories, for instance, stood more precisely for the Church of England, the rights of the Crown and the landed gentry, than the Whigs. The Whigs, on the other hand, had a greater following among the merchant classes, more particularly the members of the East India Company and other trading concerns, and among those

## *The English Constitution*

whose religious views differed from those of the Anglican Church. They placed greater emphasis on the principles of 1689 than their adversaries and were perhaps keener than the Tories on the maintenance of parliamentary privilege

But such distinctions were singularly imprecise. Party politics really represented the rivalry of great families, Pelhams, Pitts, Stanhopes, Grenvilles, Russells, Cavendishes and many another, rather than a conflict of principle. What mattered primarily was the possession of power. 'Prithee,' wrote a Tory about his rival, 'what is the nation to us, provided our friends get into power, and are in a condition to make us thrive?' But a Whig might have written the same words about a Tory opponent with equal justification. The lines running between the two parties were, as they always have been in British politics, very blurred and indistinct. Within each party it might, however, be possible to detect groups who held closely to some form of policy which they would have liked the government to follow. Party politics tended to shift less after 1815, but even at the time of the Reform Bill, there was no real social distinction between the parties and very little fundamental political difference.

Party nevertheless played an important and useful part in the history of England between 1714 and 1815. Tinged at times with bitterness, party rivalry was not devoid of social courtesy and personal contact. England was saved from the hatred and inhumanity of political rivalry in Continental countries by the experience of party government in the eighteenth century. The rivalry of two parties, whatever their points of view, also served to protect the balance of power in the Constitution, and so prevented too great a usurpation of power by either King or Parliament. Finally, party politics assisted England's movement towards democracy. A vast and inchoate contemporary literature, newspapers, pamphlets and books, which was solely concerned with political and party arguments, still exists to prove the very real interest which educated men of all classes took in political affairs. That people were able to talk about the government and even when they lacked a vote to participate

## *Local Government*

in the rough and tumble of a contemporary election gave them a political experience which was to prove valuable at a later date. The ordinary man's sole contact with political affairs came through the party system and, slight as this may appear to be to the twentieth-century politician familiar with a vast array of political clubs and organisations, such experience was nevertheless one of the foundations on which modern political democracy has been built. Edmund Burke was not so very far wrong when he stressed the importance of party government and emphasised what has since become a common convention, that the existence of parties was an explicit and integral feature of the British Constitution.

### *7 Local government*

Although the modern historian naturally places the greater emphasis on the functions of the central government, he has always to remember that in earlier centuries than his own the majority of English people were far more concerned with the activities of the local government in their district. That local government was remarkably free to develop its own policy or to act without interference or surveillance from any department of the central government. The authorities in London appointed many of the leading officials in local government, and required them to enforce and execute the new laws that Parliament may have passed. Otherwise Whitehall, to use the synonym for modern departmental administration, only intervened when the country was in the middle of a great national emergency. Thus, only lightly touched by the interfering hand of the central government, a miscellaneous collection of local bodies, endowed with considerable powers and a very wide and varied collection of duties, governed both town and country.

These authorities were largely survivals from a medieval past, many of them anachronistic and others incredibly outmoded, but they continued to exist, and to flourish to some

### *The English Constitution*

degree, until the utilitarianism of the Whig reformers swept them away. There were, for instance, a number of ancient judicial authorities, the manorial court, the court leet, which continued (as at Manchester) to exercise a considerable authority. Thus it is impossible to produce any clear pattern from the intricacies of English local government in the eighteenth century. It consisted of a complex congeries of local institutions, some corrupt, some enlightened and efficient, but all in some way or another overlapping each other's borders of authority.

The parish, with its vestry meeting, was the focal point of England's local government. Each of the nine thousand parishes in England and Wales was governed in all local matters by the parishioners through the vestry meeting. This meeting, which usually took place in the local church, varied in competence and composition. Outwardly democratic, the meetings were in fact fast becoming oligarchical in their character. Supposedly the parishioners all met together with equal rights to elect the local officials. In actual fact the meeting was everywhere limited to the ratepayers, thus excluding the poorer members of the parish from taking part in its affairs. In any case the lead was so definitely taken by the more important people in the parish, the squire, the parson, the local landowner, that the other parishioners who attended merely 'followed in their train.' In some places the ratepayers eventually stayed away altogether and the meeting became known as a 'closed' or 'select' vestry. But not all vestry meetings were inefficient or unenlightened, the vestries of Liverpool and Leeds, for example, were singularly public-spirited in their policy and practice. Yet in fact the parish's powers were at every turn restricted by the local J.P., and, partly because of this and partly because of the way in which the vestry meeting had developed, the meeting had actually become the instrument of the dominant minority, the landowning gentry.

The tendency to telescope authority into the hands of a few wealthy or well-born people was also reflected in the municipal government of the towns. There were two hundred or so

### *Municipal Government*

chartered boroughs which had been given the right to govern themselves through a municipal corporation. The size of the corporation varied very considerably, it might consist of a few important townsmen, as at Cambridge, or it might embrace nearly the whole town, as at Oxford. Whether the corporation which governed the towns was closed or open it was invariably corrupt, and remained so until the Municipal Reform Act of 1835 remodelled the whole system. London, both in form and practice, constituted a notable exception. In practice the local borough government had greater independence than the vestry as it was wholly immune from the authority of the sheriff, and practically so from that of the lord-lieutenant and J.P.

The lord-lieutenant of the county was, and technically still is, the most important person in the county, the office was conferred then, and now, on the most conspicuous of the local territorial magnates. The Earl of Shaftesbury, for instance, was the Lord-Lieutenant of Dorset. The Marquess Townshend presided over the destinies of Norfolk. The Duke of Newcastle was Lord-Lieutenant of Middlesex, Nottingham and Sussex. A lord-lieutenant still had many duties in the eighteenth century, though the office was in the process even then of becoming mainly ornamental. His lead was of great importance in times of crisis and possible danger, as for instance in 1745 or during the Napoleonic Wars, especially in commanding the local militia forces or raising the Hanoverian equivalent of the more recent Home Guard. The lord-lieutenant's real power came through the influence, political and social, which he as the leading nobleman of the district, enhanced by the authority which his post as lord-lieutenant gave him, wielded over his neighbours and the lesser gentry. What he said and did might well affect the outcome of a general election and might mould the attitude of a county towards the central government. There were occasions during the century when the latter did not scruple to remove a lord-lieutenant from his post for political opposition.

The corner-stone of local government was neither the lord-lieutenant nor the sheriff, whose functions were already purely

## *The English Constitution*

nominal, nor the vestry meeting, but the Justice of the Peace. Originating in the later Middle Ages, the J P was made the executive officer of their government by the Tudor sovereigns, two hundred years later he was still the real link between Westminster and the country, the link of loyalty as well of administration. Hence the anxiety of the central government to secure the support of the country gentlemen from whose ranks he was usually chosen. He was appointed by one of the Secretaries of State, on the recommendation of local officials and latterly of the lord-lieutenant with whom indeed his appointment really rested, and held office without intermission from the time of his appointment to the day of his death. Anyone who owned an estate worth £100 a year—laws passed in 1731 and 1744 had raised the property qualification from £20 per annum to £100 per annum, a further illustration of the way in which property formed the foundation of the eighteenth-century administration—was eligible for selection. In practice the Justices represented a cross-section of the local gentry, some Anglican clergymen, and a few wealthy merchants who had bought estates.

Their judicial and administrative functions were varied and all-embracing. Acting through the quarter sessions they were able to pass in review a whole series of crimes varying from felony and even treason to less important misdemeanours. At petty sessions two Justices could deal with a series of minor offences and, with the addition of a third Justice, were empowered to pass a sentence of seven years' transportation for rick-burning. There were furthermore few aspects of administration with which they were not concerned—road-repairs, the licensing of ale-houses and trades, the fixing of wages, the conduct of prisons and houses of correction, the levying of rates, and the poor rate in particular, the recruitment of soldiers, the upkeep of bridges and sundry other duties which affected the life of townsman or countryman. In the main they seemed to have carried out their duties well, but there were instances, if illustrations in contemporary novels are to be trusted, where they abused their authority and acted as local tyrants. However, the economic

### *The Justice of the Peace*

and political changes of the period were in fact making their task increasingly difficult. Gradually they fell back, like the class to which they belonged, on the policy of 'laissez-faire,' convinced that the natural development of a society, apart, of course, from the maintenance of laws like the game laws which so closely affected their interests, was better suited to the country's needs than constant intervention or surveillance.

The structure of local government remained practically unaltered throughout the long period under review, but there were many signs that it was even more in need of reform in 1815 than the central government itself. What needs to be remembered, however, is that it continued to function and to influence men's activities and ideas as much as, and possibly with greater effect than did, the House of Commons itself.

The form of government in the eighteenth century was neither particularly good nor particularly bad. It was inevitably mainly concerned with and principally carried on at the behest of and by a minority of the community. Given that natural limitation, it was carried on, all things considered, remarkably well and, what is so important, it provided for those avenues of change which have gradually led or are leading to the creation of modern democracy in Great Britain.



### CHAPTER III

## KINGDOM AND ELECTORATE

### 1. *The government of Hanover*

The royal arms of England's new ruling house between 1714 and 1801 disclose the European significance of the dynasty and point to a factor often forgotten by the historian of Hanoverian England. For these arms, without going into the technical jargon of heraldry, consisted of the royal lions of England and Scotland, the French fleur-de-lys (representing the traditional claim to the French throne put forward in the Middle Ages by Edward III and Henry V), the Irish harp *and* the intricate heraldic symbolism of Hanover, two lions for Brunswick, hearts and a lion for Luneburg and a horse for Westphalia. From 1714 to 1837 the English Kings were Electors of Hanover and, by virtue of that, members of the Electoral College which elected each successive Hapsburg to the throne of the Holy Roman Empire until 1806. No historian dealing with the history of the four Georges can thus afford to neglect the possible influence which this dual sovereignty exercised over the course of British history.

The electorate of Hanover had a total area of five hundred square miles and a population of nearly three-quarters of a million. Situated in the north German plain along the valleys of the rivers Weser and Aller, the state was quite densely populated but mainly rural. There were a few small industries in the towns of which Hanover was the most important and Gottingen, with its Protestant University, the most distinguished. The Hanoverians were a fairly prosperous people, well-governed in a patriarchal way and loyally devoted to the electoral house. The Hanoverian court, resembling a miniature Versailles,

### *The Two Duchies*

revolved around the palace of Herrenhausen, attractively situated and famous for its orangeries, and the summer castle of the Gohrde John Toland described this court on the occasion of his visit in 1702 as 'extremely polite and accounted, even in Germany, as the best both for Civility and Decorum' Although his judgment was superficial, there was something attractive and peaceful about Hanover, and we are hardly surprised that the first two Georges both sighed when duty made them leave for England

Hanover, or more correctly Brunswick-Luneburg, was a comparatively new state It had come into existence as a result of intermarriage and of diplomatic and legal negotiations, which were often unscrupulous and always tortuous, between the members of the princely family As the shrewd old Duchess of Orleans, herself a German, wrote. 'the history of the House of Brunswick is just like the birthright of Esau and Jacob, the elder brother lets his blessing be taken by the younger, and then wants to have it back again.' In 1641 there were two separate duchies, Luneburg with its capital town at Celle, and Kalenberg with its capital at Hanover. Duke Ernest Augustus of Kalenberg had married Sophia, the youngest daughter of Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia and her unfortunate husband, the Elector Palatine Frederick. Sophia's grandfather was thus James I of England; her son the future George I. Her husband, Duke Ernest, had one great ambition, to unite Luneburg and Kalenberg, and to fulfil this he had evolved what he fondly believed to be a foolproof plan. He first persuaded his brother, George William, the Duke of Luneburg, to forgo a marriage with a royal princess in order that his own son, George Lewis, might marry Sophia Dorothea, the daughter of George William's commoner wife, the French woman Eleonora d'Olbreuse. That this marriage proved catastrophic did not weigh with Duke Ernest whose plans matured as he had hoped. When his father died in 1698, George Lewis became Duke of Kalenberg and on his uncle's death in 1705 Duke of Luneburg as well These two Duchies formed the basis of the electorate of Hanover.

### *Kingdom and Electorate*

The title of Elector, which meant that the Duke had the right to attend and vote at the election of the Holy Roman Emperor, had been granted to George I's father in 1692 for the services which he had rendered to the Emperor Leopold against the Turks in 1683 and 1685. The cynic might note that Hanover was strategically situated to limit the rising power of Brandenburg-Prussia whose Elector had been given the title of King in 1701. Hanover was now one of the principal states in Germany and its ruler, who was given the honourable but empty title of Arch-Treasurer of the Empire in 1710, one of its leading princes. This close association between the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg and the Imperial Hapsburgs was not without influence over the development of Hanoverian and British foreign policy.

Within his state the Elector was an autocrat, albeit a benevolent one. Hence the first two Georges' inability to appreciate or understand the tumultuous conventions of England's parliamentary tradition. In a letter of June 24th, 1735, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, relates how Mr. Seymour, a well-known Tory M.P., refused to take off his hat when George II attended the Opera. He urged that he had purposely taken a box as far away as possible from the King's party because he had a cold and wished to keep his hat on and, despite all royal pressure, he continued to wear his hat on his head throughout the performance. This trivial illustration is illuminating as it shows how justifiably irritated the first two Georges were with England. Such an incident could never have occurred in Hanover, but in England one had always to be prepared for the unthinkable. In England the King ruled with Parliament whereas in Hanover the Elector was very nearly *lex*.

The various districts which made up the electorate had their own semi-representative assemblies or *landtags*, but parliamentary government of the English type was completely unknown. Even when the Elector became King of England he still retained absolute power in Hanover, where no move could be initiated in civil or military affairs without his full consent. He appointed and dismissed his ministers at will, was absolute

## *The Government of Hanover*

Commander-in-Chief of the Hanoverian army, and the initiator and executor of the state's foreign policy. Hanover was thus a typical German *kleinstaaterei*, perhaps better governed than most, moderately peaceful and prosperous, where the Elector could say, even more truly than Louis XIV, 'l'état, c'est moi'

After George became King of England Hanover was governed through a special royal Ordinance which the Elector issued before he left in 1714. This Ordinance remained the foundation of the Hanoverian Constitution until a reform edict (which continued to embody many of the previous provisions) was issued in 1822 during the governor-generalship of the Duke of Cambridge. Eleven years later another change was made with the proclamation of the fundamental Constitutional Law.

The Ordinance laid down the way in which the Elector delegated his authority during his absence from Hanover. This power was now given, the Elector reserving to himself all important decisions, to the privy councillors of Hanover. Generally one of the councillors presided over his fellows, thus holding a position like that of the head of the British Cabinet, but in theory all the councillors' powers were equal, and the final decision was left to the Elector-King and the minister attending him (this particular issue was considerably simplified during the reign of George III when the brothers Munchausen held both the posts of presiding minister and minister in attendance).

The actual business of the electorate, in view of the way in which it was all centralised on the person of the Elector, must have taken up much of the Elector's time. This in turn meant that the Hanoverian minister in attendance was in intimate and continuous contact with the English King. This minister and his staff made up what was generally known as the German Chancery (though it was not officially so named until 1824).

London rather than Hanover became the focal point of Hanoverian business. Nearly everything was passed in review at London, but the first two Georges were particularly interested in dealing with military affairs. The Hanoverian army was controlled by a Hanoverian Commander-in-Chief, directly

### *Kingdom and Electorate*

responsible to the Elector himself. The army was in fact the property of the Elector, rather than of the Hanoverian people, and was employed or loaned by him as he thought appropriate. Hence the paradox of George II as Elector of Hanover, then a neutral state, lending his own troops to himself as King of England. The army was small and consisted of a typical professional soldiery, directly maintained and controlled by its electoral and regal master.

Foreign affairs formed another topic of perennial interest. Hanover, like England, had its own envoys accredited to foreign governments to protect its interests. These envoys, excepting the Hanoverian agent to the Imperial authorities at Ratisbon, had to send duplicate despatches to London as well as to Hanover, so that the Elector could keep constant watch over the foreign affairs of his state.

Thus, apart from the influence which individual Germans might possess over him, the Elector of Hanover was the supreme ruler of a compact and relatively important German state, very different in character from the English kingdom over which each successive Elector reigned from 1714 to 1837.

### *2. Hanover and Europe*

Britain's diplomacy was naturally influenced by the change of dynasty. Although it is impossible to state accurately the real influence which Hanoverian interests exerted over British policy, it is clear that contemporary politicians, especially in the first half of the eighteenth century, made the subordination of British interests to those of Hanover one of the leading charges against successive ministries. It is no less clear that a minister's willingness to take an interest in Hanover and its affairs was, as with Carteret (who had the additional advantage of knowing the German language) and Newcastle, a passport to the royal favour. It was only natural that Hanoverian policy should sway the course of British diplomacy to some degree, and

### *The Elector and the Emperor*

equally natural that this should sometimes conflict with British interests

Hanover's geographical and political position was the determining factor in the forming of her foreign policy. Geographically she was well placed to hold the balance of power in northern Germany against Prussia or any of the other Baltic countries. Politically her policy turned on the close identification of her interests with those of the Empire, for it was from the Holy Roman Emperor that the House of Brunswick-Luneburg had received the honours which had made it one of Germany's more important princely families. The Imperial alliance was well grounded in the history of the past. Ernest Augustus, George I's father, had taken the Emperor's part against Louis XIV of France as far back as 1674. Later his son, George, had led the Hanoverian troops who helped to raise the siege of Vienna by the Turkish hordes in 1683. Finally, after he had reaped the reward of such devoted but hardly disinterested service, the Elector had played his part in the alliance against the French during the War of the Spanish Succession.

Gratitude (which plays so small a part in the relationship of nation with nation) and self-interest (which usually predominates) bound the Elector of Hanover to the Emperor. But the alliance was not wholly one-sided. Imperial ministers in distant Vienna watched with anxious interest the increasingly important part that the two northern powers, Prussia and Russia, were playing in European history. The small state of Hanover could be employed as the spearhead of Hapsburg Imperialism against possible friends or would-be enemies. The Hapsburgs had long been suspicious of Sweden, declining power as the country now was, and friendly towards Holland. Again Hanoverian policy could be used to complete a careful and well-thought-out plan for preserving the ancient structure of the Holy Roman Empire.

There was, moreover, even in detail, no real deviation of interest between the Elector and the Emperor. Close contact with the Dutch, confirmed by a flourishing trade, made the Hanoverians as eager as the Austrians to keep friendly with

### *Kingdom and Electorate*

Holland. The Hohenzollerns, tied though they were to be by marriage with the royal House of Hanover and England, were regarded by each successive Elector-King with grave suspicion and dislike. 'The King of Prussia,' wrote George II soon after the accession of Frederick the Great in 1740, 'is a mischievous rascal, a bad friend, a bad ally, a bad relation and a bad neighbour, in fact the most dangerous and evil disposed prince in Europe.' This opinion, supported by a phalanx of letters and negotiations stretching over nearly half a century, did not entirely disappear after the Anglo-Prussian alliance of 1756, and continued to influence the Hanoverian attitude until Hanover was itself forcibly absorbed into the Prussian state in 1866.

Similar factors guided the Hanoverian attitude towards Sweden and Russia. Although Swedish power had long ago reached its climax, the campaigns of that pretentious, heroic individualist, Charles XII, who ruled Sweden until his death in 1718, made the Austrians and Hanoverians suspect Swedish ambitions in the Baltic. The Elector had hopes of using the war in which Charles XII was involved against a whole ring of enemies to acquire the two remaining portions of Swedish territory in Germany, the secularised bishoprics of Bremen and Verden. 'Le roi George,' Voltaire noted, 'n'avait aucun but en toutes ses actions que la possession de ces deux places sur lesquels il n'avait aucun droit.' These territories were commercially and strategically important because they commanded the mouths of the rivers Weser and Elbe, and would thus round off and enrich Hanoverian territory.

The chancelleries of Vienna and Hanover did not yet know what to make of the rising power of Russia. Any great power which threatened to dominate the Baltic or to impinge rather too closely on to the borders of a German state might well be an enemy, but there were various other considerations which made the exact status of the newly risen empire of the barbaric peoples of Muscovy difficult to determine. The Czar of Muscovy—for it was of Muscovy rather than of Russia that people still spoke—was also the chief enemy of the Swedes. Neither the Hapsburgs nor

### *Hanover and France*

the Hanoverians were in close contact with the Russians. The bulky but anarchic state of Poland formed a useful buffer between Imperial fears and Russian ambitions. Finally no one at the beginning of the century felt that Russia was really part of Europe, the Czar, Peter the Great, had visited most European courts, including representative German states, during the course of his reign, leaving behind him the story of an impressive, even frightening, personality whose uncouth manners and outright indelicacy, even in so indelicate an age, had disgusted his hosts. It might well be surmised that Hanover's attitude towards Russia would be the same as the Empire's unless, as at Mecklenburg in 1716, her own interests were obviously imperilled by Russian ambitions.

The relations between Hanover and France were governed by two considerations, the interests of England and of Austria *vis-à-vis* the Bourbon power. The rivalry of the Hapsburgs of Austria and the Bourbons of France can be traced back to the sixteenth century when the French Kings had been alarmed by the apparent threat of Charles V's Austro-Spanish Empire. It had reached its climax in the reign of Louis XIV, and what happened in the eighteenth century was partly the result of the backwash from the Treaty of Utrecht which had ended the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713. The French were obviously relieved by the enthronement of a Bourbon prince in Spain, while the Austrians, still angered by a peace which they had not wanted to accept, suspected French designs on the Austrian Netherlands and the Rhineland. Superficially there was nothing very fundamental at issue here, nothing that could bring about a resumption of hostilities or that could not be resolved by conference. And although very few people realised it the situation was slowly changing. The French were weaker and potentially less dangerous than they had been a century earlier. Austria was also weakening. As time went on, her interests became focused on the retention of her power in Eastern Europe. The ground was already well prepared for the alliance of the two former enemies long before the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756 took place.



### *Kingdom and Electorate*

The Hanoverians were not involved in this as principals. They had been the traditional ally of the Emperor against France and were indeed much disquietened by the possibility of an Imperial reconciliation with France. But by this time Hanoverian foreign policy had become dependent on the lead which Britain gave it. Above all else the Hanoverians were concerned, as much in the Napoleonic Wars as in the Seven Years' War, with maintaining the country's neutrality and with keeping foreign troops off her soil.

If these were the basic factors in Hanoverian foreign policy how did they compare with British policy and how far was the elder Pitt correct when he stated that Britain's interests were subordinated to the interests of what he discourteously called 'a despicable electorate'? No precise answer is possible, but all the evidence suggests that Hanoverian pressure was at its greatest when it was most possible to reconcile differences of opinion, and was correspondingly much weaker when such divergences were most marked. In general there was what we may call a compromise of interests; if there were occasions on which British diplomacy was used to attain objectives which were not primarily to Britain's advantage, there were probably far more occasions when the Hanoverians were implicated in British quarrels which could not be even remotely associated with the interests of a north German state.

A brief survey of the general course of European diplomacy illustrates this point further. Britain was involved in three major wars between 1714 and 1760, the Northern War, the Anglo-Spanish War which was soon merged into the War of the Austrian Succession, and the Seven Years' War.

If Hanoverian interests were obviously more at issue than British interests in the first of these wars, it does not follow that the rather paltry conflict which ensued bruised British aims and objects. The Elector, as we have seen, wanted to annex the duchy of Bremen and the principality of Verden which Sweden had ruled since 1648. In 1712, on the eve of a declaration of war against Sweden, the Danes had occupied both these

### *The Northern War*

territories; three years later Hanover and Denmark agreed jointly to oust the Swedes from German territory. The end came in 1721 when Sweden recognised Hanover's authority over Bremen and Verden in return for the payment of a sum of money in compensation.

It will be noted that this particular issue had in fact been joined before the Elector became King of England. Britain was not really interested in Hanover's ambitions in Bremen and Verden. Yet she had a rich commerce in the Baltic, a profitable carrying trade, valuable exports and imports, which made her eager to prevent either the Swedes or the Russians from gaining too great a dominance in the Baltic Sea. There was also a political question, subsidiary but no less urgent; it was known that negotiations had been opened up between the Jacobites and the Swedish King through the Swedish ambassador in London, Gyllenborg. It was alleged that Swedish ships had stopped, searched and seized British merchantmen in Baltic waters. The British government acted cautiously. Without actually declaring war, a fleet was sent under the command of Sir John Norris to the Baltic to protect British interests, to remind Sweden of Britain's strength and obviously to encourage the Hanoverians in their struggle with her. Charles XII's death in 1718 changed the situation as the new Swedish Queen was eager for peace and not without hopes of suitable British mediation, her husband was a German prince, Frederick of Hesse-Cassel, who had at one time served in the British armies. The British government thought that mediation might well serve the interests of all countries concerned, Hanover, Sweden and Britain, and sent Carteret to Stockholm to open up negotiations between the belligerents. The final treaty was, however, negotiated without British assistance. The intricacies of this dull Northern War show that although Hanover was far more concerned in the outcome than Britain, Britain's interests were not negligible. It cannot be truly said that Britain sacrificed her own advantages in favour of Hanover.

This was naturally even truer of the war of 1739-48. Hanover

### *Kingdom and Electorate*

had no interest in Britain's commercial troubles with Spain which initiated the conflict. But her traditions and her interests were very materially engaged in the subsequent conflict between Great Britain and the Empress Maria Teresa, and France and Frederick the Great of Prussia. George II was a firm believer in the traditional alliance of his House with the Hapsburgs and equally antipathetic towards the Hohenzollerns of Prussia, but he was also greatly concerned with the task of protecting his state from the ravages of the conflicting armies. On his visit to Hanover in 1741 he was so alarmed by the prospect of an invasion from both sides, the French from the west and their allies the Prussians from the east, that he concluded the humiliating Convention whereby Hanoverian troops were withdrawn from the war and a state of Hanoverian neutrality was proclaimed. Except from the Hanoverian point of view (and even so the Convention was of very doubtful expediency) the Convention was blameworthy. Happily it was also of short duration. Carteret, who had now succeeded Walpole as the King's chief confidant, knew German and was so well acquainted with the intricacies of Hanoverian foreign policy that the King agreed to revoke it. Hanover remained a partner in the war until the Peace of Aix brought it to an end in 1748.

There is no doubt that George II, influenced by the able Hanoverian minister then in attendance upon him in London, regarded the war from the point of view of his position as Elector of Hanover. Yet it is doubtful whether his opinions or the negotiations which led to the conclusions of the striking Convention materially influenced British policy. Some years earlier both he and Queen Caroline, influenced by their German outlook, had wanted Walpole to enter the War of the Polish Succession, without effect. George II's excessive care for his beloved Hanover attracted much attention and added to his unpopularity, but the logical judgment of the Lord Chancellor, Hardwicke, was not at fault when he asserted that Hanover was more 'hazarded by her union with Great Britain'.

In the third war, which involved every major European power

### *Hanover and Napoleon*

between 1756 and 1763, the interests of Britain and Hanover were bound to diverge. The Duke of Newcastle, formerly Secretary of State, and the King had tried to retain Britain's old alliance with Austria in the face of events which made it increasingly inexpedient. Yet even the King was not incapable of conversion. Hitherto sceptical of the Prussian alliance, he accepted it, once it was signed, as conducing to the interests of Hanover because, as Horace Walpole put it, 'this guarantee of Germany, this thorn drawn out of the side of Hanover, dispelled at once his aversion to his nephew.' When later his own son, the Duke of Cumberland, under powers which his father had given him, made the Convention of Klosterseven to save the electorate from occupation by the French, George II immediately disowned the Convention and waxed, as only an elderly and choleric parent can, highly indignant.

After 1760 Hanoverian policy was nearly always brought into alignment with British objects, sometimes to the manifest disadvantage of the state. Both the elder Munchausen and his successor, von Behr, whom George III entrusted with the government of the electorate, were peace-loving and desirous that Hanover should play as quiescent a part as possible in the politics of the Empire. The Napoleonic Wars opened up a new and on the whole disastrous epoch in Hanoverian history which clearly revealed the disadvantageous nature of the personal union between the Kingdom and the Electorate, at any rate as far as Hanover was concerned.

For Hanover was the ally of a country which was powerless to protect her from Napoleon and his satellites. In March, 1801, Hanover's old enemy, Prussia, occupied the country in return for certain alleged offences committed by Great Britain against the Armed Neutrality of the North which Prussia supported. The renewal of the war (the peace of 1802 had led to the freeing of Hanover) was followed by the French invasion and the occupation of the country; Hanover suffered one of the most ignominious disasters in her history when her army capitulated to the French at Suhlingen. Some Hanoverian troops managed to

### *Kingdom and Electorate*

escape to England where they formed the so-called German Legion which fought bravely in later battles against Napoleon, an indication of the Hanoverians' consistent devotion to the Electoral House. With a few brief intervals Hanover remained in French hands, and was indeed absorbed into the new kingdom of Westphalia created for Napoleon's brother, Jerome Bonaparte, until the War of Liberation.

Hanover received the reward of her sufferings at the Congress of Vienna where she was represented by Count Munster, an able and shrewd diplomat. As a result the new Hanoverian state, now legally raised to the status of a kingdom, emerged from the welter of war with more territory, including the coast of East Frisia. Henceforth her history was specifically German.

### *3. Hanover and England*

Hanover's influence over the formulation of British foreign policy was more or less confined to the first half of the eighteenth century. In a sense there was, as we have shown, a compromise of interests. What influence, if any, did the Hanoverians exercise over Britain's domestic policy? It is difficult to answer this question as the evidence is so slight and indirect; King Ernest Augustus transferred all the documents of the German Chancery from London to Hanover in 1837. And there is indeed very little evidence for the exercise of any real direct influence over the course of British domestic history after the first few years of George I's reign.

Such influence as we can find is mainly revealed through the characters and ideas of the first two Georges. They were intrinsically German, Hanoverian, in type. They were surrounded by a bevy of Hanoverian and German advisers with whom they were bound to remain in very close contact because of the language difficulty. This German influence was consistent throughout the period. Each successive King married a German princess: George II Caroline of Anspach; George III, Charlotte

### *Hanoverians and British Politics*

of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, George IV, Caroline of Brunswick; William IV, Adelaide of Saxe-Meinigen. So did most of their brothers and sisters. There was naturally a very large foreign element at Windsor which must have exercised at least an 'un-English' influence over the royal family.

Both George I and George II also inherited a conception of their office which may be called 'Hanoverian'. They did not understand Parliament and cherished the autocratic traditions of their forebears. But they never for a moment visualised the abolition of their British Parliament or the diminution of the country's traditional liberties. George III certainly rejoiced in the fact that he was an Englishman and never once set foot in Hanover during the long years of his reign<sup>1</sup>.

The influence which the Hanoverians exercised over the course of British politics was far subtler. It was exercised in the first instance by the members of the so-called Hanoverian 'junta,' and latterly by the Hanoverian minister in attendance. The former consisted, as far as it can be defined, of Bothmer, Robethon (who was a French Huguenot naturalised as an English citizen in 1693), Bernstorff and Gortz. Hans Caspar von Bothmer was certainly invaluable to the King at the beginning of his reign. After holding a watching brief for his master at The Hague, he worked for the Hanoverian interest in England for four years and played an important part in the proclamation of George I. He was furthermore credited by contemporaries with distributing offices under the new regime. But his influence soon waned and he was long a spent force before he died an old man at his house, No. 10 Downing Street, in 1732. Robethon's connection was even more insubstantial and obscure, but his influence was undoubtedly great and he may have merited the

<sup>1</sup> Yet note: 'Though he began his political career by regarding Hanover as "that horrid Electorate which has always lived upon the very vitals of this poor country," he ended by regarding it with such affection that the possibility of losing it ranked with Catholic emancipation as one of the subjects that could not be mentioned to him for fear of bringing on another attack of insanity'—*Letters of George III to Lord Bute*, ed. Romney Sedgwick (1939), xi.

### *Kingdom and Electorate*

comment 'the very soul of George I's diplomatic chancery' Bernstorff was a rival of Bothmer and for a time advised Stanhope, but he too suffered an eclipse and remained behind in Hanover in 1720, dying three years later Gortz also soon returned to Hanover. All the evidence suggests that the new King turned to those whom he knew to be his trusted friends for advice at the beginning of the reign, but as soon as he saw how things were in England, he gradually reduced the power of his Hanoverian contingent and relied more and more on Sir Robert Walpole

The minister in attendance upon the King continued to proffer advice and possibly to influence decisions, but there is no real evidence to suggest that his intervention was at any time very decisive, and after 1760 it was almost certainly negligible

All that has been said suggests certain conclusions England and Hanover were ruled as two totally independent states, a personal union so manifestly inconvenient to the King that both George I and his grandson, Frederick, seriously considered dividing their dominions by will Nevertheless the union resulted in a certain interchange of ideas, cultural as well as political and commercial, and in a correlation of foreign policy to suit both countries. What influence Hanover had over England was never at any time very great, but without some appreciation of the other state, its government and history, it is impossible to comprehend fully the course of English history itself.

#### CHAPTER IV

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HANOVERIANS, 1714-1721

#### 1. *The accession of George I*

Although it will always be entertaining to discuss whether the Old Pretender could have become James III of England, there can be no question that the stars in their courses, if faint nebulae can be called stars, fought for the Hanoverians. Queen Anne died at Kensington on Sunday morning, August 1st, 1714. King George I sailed in the *Peregrine* from the Hague on Thursday, September 16th, arrived off Gravesend the next day, but on account of the fog did not actually reach Greenwich until the Saturday. Between these two dates events had occurred which enabled the new King to take his throne without fear of imminent rebellion. On the very day that Queen Anne died the leading Tories had met to discuss what course of action they should take; the vigorous Bishop Atterbury of Rochester alone out of his colleagues wanted to proclaim the Old Pretender King. Bolingbroke, the most influential of the group, disagreed and so 'the Bishop fell into a great passion . . . and quitted them.'

There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of Bolingbroke's summing up of the situation. That brilliant if wayward Tory politician had everything to gain and nothing to lose by the accession of a Stuart King, but he realised that public opinion had crystallised more and more in favour of George of Hanover. 'The fruit,' as he wrote to his friend, Dean Swift, 'turned rotten at the very moment it grew ripe.' The Act of Settlement, which had been passed on the death of Anne's surviving child, the Duke of Gloucester, in 1700, clearly debarred James II or his son from ascending the English throne if they remained Roman Catholics.



### *The Establishment of the Hanoverians*

As explicitly the succession was settled in favour of James I's granddaughter, the Electress Sophia of Hanover, and her son, George Lewis, now the reigning Elector Anne, for all her devotion to the Protestant succession, disliked the Hanoverian House and had refused to receive any of its members in England, but her sense of political reality made her realise that the Hanoverian succession was eventually inevitable. It was probably with this thought in her mind that she had placed, on Friday, July 30th, two days before her death, the White Staff of the Lord Treasurership in the hands of Charles Talbot, the Duke of Shrewsbury, bidding him in a failing voice 'to use it for the good of my people.' Whether Anne was conscious enough to have questioned the wisdom of her Council's nomination of Shrewsbury to the vacant post is doubtful, but in appointing him she foiled the plans of the more extreme Jacobites and so secured the peaceful accession of George I.

Anne mirrored the wishes of her subjects. No riots attended the proclamation of George I. Neither then nor later had the people the slightest affection for their German-speaking Monarch or his unattractive entourage, but, excepting the sentimental few, they disliked the Stuart court at Commercy in Lorraine even more. The Old Pretender himself was a curious mixture of weakness and strength, 'a little statue placed on a mighty pedestal,' but no more unattractive than George I. What people disliked were those things which the Stuart represented. His close contact with the hated enemy, the French, his very Catholic piety (which did not, incidentally, prevent his maintaining a Protestant chapel for his mistress), and, above all, the Stuart political tradition with its long record of turmoil, alienated a large body of political trimmers. With some exceptions the nobles saw that a King who depended on the great magnates for the government of the country suited the interests of their order better than the impecunious and intolerant Stuart. The merchants as well as the mass of the middle class saw that political turmoil would be bad for business and would upset the equilibrium which the Treaty of Utrecht had brought to the country

### *The Dismissal of Bolingbroke*

Foreign trade had expanded greatly between 1711 and 1714, the recovery of the stock market had been partially retarded by the baseless rumour of the death of Anne early in 1714, but the lapse was only temporary and the peaceful enthronement of the Hanoverian further stimulated the rising tide of prosperity.

Even those who were untouched by vested interests, the ordinary commoners, except some High Church parsons and a bevy of intellectuals or would-be intellectuals at that reputed home of lost causes, the University of Oxford, wanted peace and prosperity and so welcomed, though with no undue enthusiasm, the Hanoverian succession. Bishop Gibson of London in an open letter to the clergy averred that 'interest and duty' as well as 'inclination and endeavour' should induce the clergy to be loyal to the new dynasty. Thus lack of unity among the Jacobites, a shrewd awareness of what best suited their own interests as well as a weariness with political strife and armed conflict, and devotion to the Protestant succession, gave George I a throne which he would never have acquired, let alone fought for, if the opposition had been stiff.

On his arrival the new King was shrewd enough to see where he would be served best, but he had no wish to place himself under the governance of any one political party. 'We are gaping and staring,' wrote a Tory correspondent to Swift, 'to see who is to rule us'. Until George arrived in England the country was ruled by twenty-five Lord-Justices, the majority of whom were Whigs. They showed what the future had in store by dismissing Bolingbroke from his Secretaryship of State. He lingered for a time, feared for his head and, dressed as a courier, landed at Calais (March, 1715), where he offered his services to the Pretender. In England the Hanoverian agent, Bothmer, carefully sifted the candidates for ministerial office through the letters which he dispatched to his master's other ear, the French Huguenot secretary, Jean de Robethon. Both these men saw that, if the King was to secure and retain the loyalty of his people, he must have the loyal support of the more influential people in the country. Thus the first ministry, the

### *The Establishment of the Hanoverians*

names of which had been laid before George while he was still at his well-loved palace of Herrenhausen, was designed to secure the support of the Whig nobles and the moderate Tories as well as that of the wealthy merchants and the City of London.

The new ministry, focused as it was around the old Whig junto of Queen Anne's day, was an ever-shifting mosaic. Within the next few years there were no less than four First Lords of the Treasury (Shrewsbury was the last Lord Treasurer), three Lord Presidents and three Lord Privy Seals. Yet political stability was maintained because all the moderates, however divided among themselves, realised that they had a vested interest in the establishment and continued maintenance of the Hanoverian dynasty. The two leading figures in the administration were James, Earl Stanhope, and Charles, Viscount Townshend.

Although Stanhope was new to political responsibility, his very considerable abilities, especially in foreign affairs, were soon revealed. He was a man of much experience who had proved his capacity as a soldier in Spain during the War of the Spanish Succession, possessed of clear vision, a Whig in politics. It was as a diplomat that Stanhope excelled. His free and easy manner, his love of the bottle and appreciation of the risqué story made him a welcome companion and served to conceal a native shrewdness and balanced judgment.

The new ministry's objects were obvious to all. After a remarkably cold winter, they had to secure the continuance of a foreign dynasty, certainly unglamorous and possibly repellent to many English people, while they ingratiated themselves with the King and his Hanoverian advisers. The general election of 1715, partly manœuvred by the government, reflected public opinion; the Whig ministry had the sure support of the Commons. A Tory versifier, not without a touch of humour, wrote:

Farewell, old year, old monarch, and old Tory,  
Farewell, old England, thou hast lost thy glory

Stanhope and his colleagues could now proceed confidently to accuse their opponents of disloyalty by impeaching the

## *The '15 Rebellion*

lately functioning ministers. Before they could finish this task the first Jacobite rebellion had broken out.

### *2. The '15 Rebellion*

The Jacobite rebellion, which was not unexpected, revealed the incompetence of the Stuarts and their advisers. James Edward, the Old Pretender, was a young man of twenty-seven, 'tall and lean, a prominent chin, wide mouth, big nose, narrow oval face,' with plenty of goodwill and very little political wisdom. When Bolingbroke arrived at his court, he was already the prey of conflicting advice, the strict intolerance of Catholicism urged on him by his mother, the widowed Mary of Modena, and the broader point of view advocated by his Scottish adviser, Mar. Bolingbroke stood head and shoulders above the petty adventurers and loyal squires who made up the exiles' court, but he never gained the prince's confidence. He soon found that James Edward lived in a world of his own, a land of dreams evolved by flatterers and his own dim thoughts, 'the fact is that he dwelt in a maze of unrealities, out of which he was never strong or bold enough to break.' Bolingbroke himself wrote succinctly to Wyndham: 'He talked to me like a man who expected every moment to set out for England or Scotland, but who did not very well know for which.'

Whatever hopes of success the Jacobites had ultimately depended on the political situation in Europe. The death of Louis XIV, on whom they were relying for men and money, was a grievous blow; 'my hopes,' said Bolingbroke, 'sank as he declined and died when he expired.' The Regent of France believed that a reconciliation with the Hanoverians would assist France along the path of economic recovery and suit his own interests as well. Thus, apart from the insubstantial Jacobitism of the Swedish King, Charles XII (inspired by his dislike of Hanover), there was very little in the diplomatic world of 1715 to warrant high hopes.



FIG 2 Europe





### *The Establishment of the Hanoverians*

Even less optimism could have been felt by a privileged observer had he been able to watch the course of events 'The strange confused chaos' which James Edward noted during the course of a visit to St. Malo in November, 1714, haunted the expedition from the start. Much depended on simultaneous invasion of England and Scotland but this plan never matured. The Earl of Mar, whose shifting allegiance gained him the well-earned nickname of 'Bobbing John,' actually raised the standard of rebellion at Braemar on September 6th, within a few days of Louis XIV's death. The outbreak could hardly have been timed for a more unfortunate date, even if the rebel force quickly increased from sixty men to five thousand. Scotland was as much divided by clan rivalry as by political partisanship. The powerful Campbells, hereditarily loyal to the principles of the Glorious Revolution, at once raised the royal standard; the influential Duke of Atholl, a jealous neighbour of Mar, waited the turn of events. His son, the Marquis of Tullibardine, joined the rebels, and, despite a virtual offer of a free pardon, remained loyal to the Jacobite cause until his death in 1746.

Initially the military weakness of the home government raised Jacobite hopes. Perth, within easy reach of the Highland recruiting centres, fell to the rebels on September 14th and, in spite of Mar's defective strategy, a rebel force entered England on November 1st. The northern counties, as in Elizabethan days, represented Catholic reaction and were steeped in traditional loyalty to the Stuart House. Yet the actual numbers grew less rather than greater, for the Scottish Jacobites had no real desire to leave their native counties for a strange and hostile land. One English rebel force under Forster was defeated at Preston on November 13th. What enthusiasm the Jacobites had left for the fight evaporated after the news of Argyll's victory over Mar at Sheriffmuir. This defeat, in fact less decisive than that of Preston, revealed the pitiful indecision of Mar's mind and in practice doomed the Jacobite cause in 1715.

The military events showed that although many Englishmen were willing to drink to the King over the water and even to

### *The Jacobite Failure in England*

engage in correspondence with him, they were unprepared to lose their lives for so uncertain a cause. A few turbulent and adventurous clansmen, some English Roman Catholics, and the hardy but illiterate Lancashire peasants who had little to lose except their lives, formed the main pillars of the rebellion. The romantic may find the story of the '15 fascinating and attractive; the historian, acknowledging the aesthetic lift of the tartan, realises that the Stuart cause represented a social, political and even, to some extent, an economic system doomed in the long run to extinction.

While these events were taking place in Scotland, the government did what it could to stem the possible tide of revolt in England. The small and widely dispersed army had enabled the Jacobites to gain a secure hold in Scotland, but Stanhope acted with decision in the west of England where it was expected that Ormonde would try to land with another body of supporters. Members of the Commons and the Lords suspected of favouring the Jacobite cause were arrested. Bristol, Bath and the notoriously disloyal city of Oxford, the ports of Southampton and Plymouth, were garrisoned with loyal soldiery against any possible invader. Yet the stock market remained remarkably firm<sup>1</sup>, thus reflecting the public confidence in the government's vigilance and ability to deal with the situation.

Thus, apart from Ormonde's invading force in 1719 which the winds and the waves practically dispersed before it reached the English coast, the Jacobite rebellion was all over by April, 1716. It had strengthened rather than weakened both government and dynasty. Until the rebels openly defied the government, Stanhope had laboured under the disadvantage of dealing with an unknown quantity of disaffection. The peaceful accession of the House of

<sup>1</sup> An expert witness, Dr W. R. Scott, affirms 'The total fall from the highest quotations of 1714-15 to the lowest recorded from October to November, 1715, was between 12 per cent. and 14 per cent. in the stocks of the Bank of England, the East India and South Sea Companies and the Million Bank. During the same period the decline in the annuities, guaranteed by the State, was from 8 per cent to 10 per cent.' *Joint-Stock Companies* (1, 392)



### *The Establishment of the Hanoverians*

Hanover had sent the Jacobite movement underground where it had circulated and eddied within many different cliques of society. Now the government knew its opponents, and could distinguish between latent disloyalty and political opposition. The more prominent Jacobites were in prison or abroad, finding like Bolingbroke that the romance of exile was far less apparent in Paris than in London. The government felt that it could afford to act generously. Few of the leaders, in all three peers and twenty-six commoners, suffered the death penalty while some seven hundred of the rebels were sent to labour in the plantations of the West Indies. Bereft of the aura of romance the '15 rebellion appears as a practicable essay in incompetence which strengthened rather than weakened the regime it set out to destroy. The episode did not end the Jacobite danger. A host of intriguers continued to rouse trouble on the Continent, at Madrid, Stockholm, Paris and Vienna. Even in England itself there were many who looked askance at the Hanoverian regime, a sedan chairman, we are told, once knocked at the window of the Princess of Wales and informed her that she was no princess in England and that the people would be happy when James III was King. But Jacobitism was too divided, too ill-founded in idea and programme, to deflect the people from their loyalty to the throne.

### *3. The beginnings of the Whig supremacy*

It was, then, with renewed strength that the ministry set out to re-establish the Hanoverians. Stanhope made use of the opportunity which the failure of the rebellion afforded him to oust the remaining Tories from the government, while he tried to strengthen the ministry's following in the provinces by making the Whig interests secure there. Justices of the Peace who were suspected of favouring either Tories or Jacobites were replaced by men known to support the present government. As the Justice of the Peace so often gave the lead in all local matters

### *The Beginnings of Whig Supremacy*

this is some proof of the government's shrewdness. Yet it was soon confronted by other difficulties.

Although the Whigs were united about fundamental issues like the maintenance of the Hanoverians and the Protestant Succession, the central government was far from stable. There were three administrations between 1714 and 1721 in all of which Stanhope held office. So did the bitter but politically experienced Charles Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, whose abilities contemporaries so greatly overrated. The other members of the administrations, apart from Townshend and Walpole, were for the most part aristocratic nonentities, in sum eight dukes, one marquis, nine earls, one viscount, two barons and four commoners, a representative collection of eighteenth-century ministers. Yet there was a great deal of division in Cabinet and party which led to repeated changes among the office-holders and some splits in the party itself. A dispute over foreign policy led to Townshend's resignation in 1717 as well as to that of his protégé, Walpole, but both returned to office before 1721. This was not the only difficulty which faced the ministry as it prepared further to strengthen the Whig hold over the country.

The political history of these first years of the Hanoverian period was further complicated by the personal hostility of George I and the Prince of Wales. The political opposition, moderate Tory or dissentient Whig, were quick to make use of this trouble and to encourage it for their own interests. The issue came to a head in 1717 when George I was persuaded to leave his son as Regent while he visited Hanover. The King suspected that his son might abuse his position and was further alarmed by what he learned of his son's activities in England. The Prince, it appeared, had made a short triumphant progress concluding with a visit to Tunbridge Wells, where 'he visited the Chapel, took a turn in the walks, tasted the waters and gave his hand to several to kiss.' Such princely dalliance aroused the royal disapproval and was one of the factors which led to the dismissal of Townshend, the minister who had remained in England. A further quarrel took place at the birth of the

### *The Establishment of the Hanoverians*

Princess' baby in November, 1717. The King insisted that the Duke of Newcastle should be a godfather; the choleric-tempered prince disagreed and, finding that he could not overrule his father's wishes, vented his wrath on Newcastle. Shaking his finger at him, he exclaimed in his broken English 'Rascal, I will find you out.' Newcastle thought that he had said 'I will fight you,' and, infinitely perturbed, believed that the royal quarrel had landed him in a duel with the heir to the throne. The King, angered by what he regarded as his son's unfilial conduct, banished the Prince from St. James's, while, in an effort to sustain his own popularity, he made visits to different parts of the home counties. The Prince bought Leicester House, which became the centre of all 'loyal' disaffection, more particularly of the dissident Whigs and moderate Tories.

These difficulties, however, were changes of pattern rather than changes of substance. The ministry as well as its leading opponents were determined to keep the House of Hanover on the throne. The Jacobite rebellion provided the ministry with a good excuse to postpone the general election, due to be held in 1718; they introduced a Septennial Act which extended the maximum duration of this and later Parliaments' lives for another four years.

After a brief interval in which the shape of the ministry altered yet again through a split in the Whig ranks, Stanhope introduced his other measures for strengthening the regime. The presence of a Whig opposition in the Commons, led by Walpole, made it impossible longer to equate the opposition with Jacobitism. In an effort to confirm and extend the hold which the party had over the Dissenters, and in line with the principles of religious toleration to which Stanhope was sincerely attached, he now brought forward measures for the repeal of the two Tory Acts against Dissenters, the Occasional Conformity Act of 1711 and the Schism Act of 1714. As the measures proved successful, Stanhope thought of trying to reconcile the English Roman Catholics to the regime by granting them a greater degree of toleration.

### *The Peerage Bill of 1719*

Acting through a Roman Catholic priest of English extraction, the Abbé Strickland, he managed to get papal approval for the new dynasty, but the mass of the English people suspected Roman Catholicism too much to follow the minister's enlightened lead. His measures were, of course, as much a matter of expediency as of idealism. Dissent had greatly increased its membership among the mercantile classes and had a following among the gentry. Thus, the repeal of the Acts with which the Tories had sought to strengthen their hold over the Church of England was a reward for the Dissenters' past loyalty and a bribe for future support.

Stanhope now turned his attention to the House of Lords, which as the hereditary House could be the leading opponent of the government and the chief channel of royal influence. If the Whigs could limit the Crown's right of creating peers, the party could entrench itself in the Lords and enforce its wishes, irrespective of whether the Commons agreed or not. It was with the idea of securing a Whig hold over the Lords that Stanhope introduced the Peerage Bill of 1719. It provided that the House of Lords, except for six new creations, should be limited to its existing numbers. The government justified its action by saying that an excessive number of new creations, such as had occurred in 1712, upset the balance of the constitution. But Stanhope had not reckoned with the vigorous and intelligent opposition of the dissentient Whigs under the lead of Walpole. Walpole asserted that the bill was a challenge to the liberties of the English people; 'the Crown,' he said, 'is dependent upon the Commons by the power of granting money. The Commons are dependent on the Crown by the power of dissolution: the Lords will now be made independent of both.' Self-interested his comments may well have been, but they were directly to the point. The Peerage Bill was thrown out by 269 votes to 177.

The failure brought the Whig party together again. A formal reconciliation was arranged between father and son, 'by giving back the Prince his beefeaters, his guards and his children, he [George I] would have his debts paid, gain Walpole's services

### *The Establishment of the Hanoverians*

and leave his son politically impotent.' In reply to his daughter's congratulations, George wrote acidly. 'Thank you for all the obliging compliments you make upon my son's submission, which would have been better for coming sooner and without the persuasion of the party, which is also reconciled.' And that was the real point. The party was now reunited, just in time to meet a perilous economic crisis caused by the South Sea Bubble.

Although the fatal cloud of the South Sea Bubble tends to obscure the minister's earlier activities, there can be little doubt about the positive contribution which he had made towards firmly establishing the House of Hanover on the throne of England. The country was quiet and relatively prosperous. The Jacobite menace remained a bogey, but a bogey stuffed with straw. Finally, the country's reputation abroad stood immensely enhanced through the intricate yet able diplomacy of Stanhope and his subordinates.

#### *4. Stanhope's foreign policy, 1714-1721*

The course—and meaning—of British foreign policy between 1714 and 1721 is extraordinarily obscure and intricate. Diplomacy of these years resembles a game of chess in which no less than six or seven different players are moving their pawns to secure valuable gains, such a game of chess as has never been played within the ordinary dimensions of man's mind. If the Treaty of Utrecht, which brought the War of the Spanish Succession to a close in 1713, had left the combatants materially exhausted, it had not changed their final objectives. The Holy Roman Emperor, Charles VI, ruler of the Low Countries, the Lombard plain, Austria, Hungary, Naples, Sardinia, nominal suzerain over three hundred German principalities, possessor of no less than thirty-eight titles, and only a few years earlier greeted as Charles III of Spain, believed that the treaties which had ended the war betrayed the Imperial cause. His ambitions marched east, west, north and south and towards his own heart. In the east he

*The European Outlook, 1714-21*

wished to find allies who would support him against the Turk, enable the Hapsburg eagle to fly securely over the rich Hungarian plain, and perhaps—who could know—help him to extend his influence in the direction of Poland, the aristocratic no-man's-land of Europe. In the north, he suspected the rising power of Prussia and disliked the declining power of Sweden. In the south he saw in the fertile vineyards of Italy a spring-board by which he might yet acquire the territory which he claimed and restrain Spanish ambitions in there. Then to the west there was perhaps some chance of curbing France's power and of replenishing the only too frequently empty coffers at Vienna by working up a useful export trade through the Belgian ports. Finally, in his heart of hearts (after 1717), meaning more to him even than his cellars of Imperial Tokay, was his intention to secure the succession of his daughter, Maria Teresa, to his hereditary dominions. These objects, varying in importance according to the prevailing diplomatic situation, brought Imperial policy into touch with nearly every alliance or projected negotiation.

The United Provinces, as neighbours of the Austrian Netherlands, felt that the Anglo-Imperial alliance was the best guarantee of their future safety. But they were the prey of conflicting ambitions; their Calvinism made them distrust the Emperor as a Roman Catholic, and their trade the British. This last statement needs qualification. The Dutch were still economically a rich country, their economic decline cannot be dated much earlier than 1740. But there was a change in the form of their economic predominance. Hitherto, Dutch profits had accrued out of their vast carrying trade, and from the way in which Amsterdam had become a financial and marketing centre for all Europe. Now, however, political conditions reduced their direct economic influence and so obliged them to emphasise to an increasing extent their supremacy through the handling of finance. Within the next half-century Dutch investments in England, especially in the national debt and in government stock, were immense, this is a factor of inestimable importance which has been rarely recognised by British historians. Undoubtedly,

### *The Establishment of the Hanoverians*

it made the Dutch anxious to maintain peace since war must inevitably upset the balance of trade and cause an economic crisis.

The French situation had altered almost simultaneously with the change of dynasty in England, as the septuagenarian Louis XIV, England's great foe, had died in September, 1715. The new King, Louis XV (1715-1774), cherubic in expression but callous in action if contemporary reports of the way he treated his pet animals are to be believed, was a delicate boy of five years who was not expected to live. Thus, as soon as Louis was dead, the proposals which he had made for a regency were set aside by his nephew, Philip, Duke of Orleans. The new Regent had few virtues and many vices; he professed to hold conversations with the Devil and certainly indulged in the lusts of the flesh, but he was a kind, even an over-indulgent father, a cultured and witty man. His court formed a contrast in its meretricious vulgarity with the dull sobriety of Versailles in Louis's later years. Politically he was ambitious, but those ambitions were endangered by the life of gaiety and dissipation which brought him to the grave a few years hence. His chief adviser was the subtle, distinctly unclerical Abbé Dubois, a pander to the Regent's vices, a friend and companion to Stanhope years earlier in matters not dissimilar, but withal a capable diplomat who saw that peace was absolutely necessary to the recovery of France. This meant reconciliation with England and friendship with Spain.

The Spaniards formed yet another group of players. Exhausted by a series of wars, their trade languishing and largely in foreign hands, their economic decline self-evident, their King, the Bourbon Philip V, melancholic, lethargic and yet singularly uxorious, they had three important things to their credit (or apparently so), the new Queen, Elizabeth Farnese, an Italian princess who was ambitious both for her native land of Parma and her newly adopted country; a succession of able ministers, including the great Alberoni, and the wealth of the Americas. Spain's chief problem was to regain predominance by a series of alliances, in fact to win a war without fighting it. 'It is my aim,'

### *Stanhope's Northern Policy*

wrote Alberoni in May, 1716, rather less succinctly, 'that the King should remain at peace with everyone, in order that one day he may be in a position to make war on those who may not wish to be his friends.'

The diplomacy of northern Europe was wreathed in the fog of war while Stanhope held office. Following the tradition of his Vasa ancestors, Charles XII of Sweden fought relentlessly against Peter the Great to maintain Swedish power in the Baltic and along the north German coast. He was fighting a losing battle since long years of conflict had weakened Swedish resources in men and materials. The King's attitude towards England depended on his interpretation of his country's political and economic needs. Thus Swedish dislike of Hanover resulted in the Jacobite intrigues of the Swedish representative in England, while British fear of Russian domination in the Baltic later led to Carteret's mission to Stockholm.

No wonder, then, that Stanhope's diplomatic contacts bewilder and bemuse the historian, for he had to deal with the vagaries of European rivalries and to protect the interests of both Britain and Hanover. His northern policy, as we have seen in our review of Hanover, was very largely an attempt to identify the political interests of the electorate with the commercial interests of England. The Treaty of Greifswald (1715) committed George I as Elector to fight the Swedes while George as King of England was committed by an earlier treaty to help the Swedes against their enemies. But treaties depend for their validity on their expediency. Stanhope sent a British fleet under Norris to the Baltic to protect British commerce and to make himself as unpleasant to the Swedes as possible without actually doing anything that would lead to war. This policy satisfied the British merchants and Hanoverian politicians until George I felt that the Russian landing in Mecklenburg challenged the security of Hanover. Stanhope realised that the restoration of peace between Russia and Sweden was the best policy and so worked to form 'so strong a league of North German and Scandinavian powers that Russia would be forced to abandon the dangerous hegemony



### *The Establishment of the Hanoverians*

she had acquired in the Baltic ' Carteret was sent on a protracted embassy to Sweden to mediate, but although most of the states came to terms with each other, Russia remained outside the ring and so the mission failed of its final purpose.

The final definitive Treaty of Nystadt (1721), which brought this long Northern War to an end, could not in any sense be called Stanhope's work, nor did it conflict with the interests of either Hanover or Britain. The commercial interests of Britain in Baltic waters remained extensive throughout the period. As for the Elector, he had gained his much-cherished territory of Bremen and Verden. Furthermore, Britain's greater interest in northern Europe had led to some contact with the rising power of Prussia which led, despite the mutual antipathy of Hohenzollern and Hanoverian, in the long run to the great alliance of which William Pitt made such good use in the Seven Years' War. All things considered, Stanhope had reason to be satisfied with the policy which he had adopted towards the northern countries.

Stanhope's real talents are most clearly revealed in his conduct of British policy in southern Europe. Here he was freed from the preoccupation of protecting both Hanover and Britain, except in so far as the presence of Russian troops in Mecklenburg in 1716 made George I especially anxious to conclude a treaty of friendship with France. At the start of the period England's position was strategically and diplomatically unsatisfactory. Most of her allies in the War of the Spanish Succession believed that she had deserted them. Her former enemies were naturally unfriendly. The new dynasty was insecure and confronted with the intrigues of English Jacobite agents abroad.

Stanhope's task might have dismayed a man of less ability, but his experience as a soldier and as a diplomat stood him in good stead. And he realised that the security of the dynasty, its prestige with foreigners and its popularity with its own people, very largely depended on the way in which foreign issues were handled. He made it his first aim to increase the number of England's friends by building a series of alliances which would give warning to the country's enemies that a policy of peace was

### *Britain, Spain, and the Empire*

a sounder investment than a policy of war. He was particularly concerned with stemming Jacobite influence at the courts of Madrid and Paris which would naturally tend to make their policy anti-British. In general he was more immediately concerned with the reconciliation of conflicting powers which would best serve the interests of each.

In his opening years he had to fence for his position. He saw that the needs of the moment made the old conventional policy of Anglo-Dutch, Anglo-Imperial friendship more profitable and more in accord with the needs of Hanover than the Anglo-French *rapprochement* which Bolingbroke had tried to initiate after Utrecht. The special instructions which he took with him to Vienna display the chief points in his more immediate policy. 'We look,' so runs the note, 'upon the Spanish Low Countries to be by their situation the truest and surest pledge of a firm and perpetual friendship between us, the Emperor and the States-General; and consequently the strongest bulwark against the encroaching power of France.' The implications of this mission to Vienna were more important than its effects. It helped to restore Imperial confidence in English diplomacy and frightened France.

The question of Spain was his other main concern. Anglo-Spanish trade had been very profitable until war interrupted it. Stanhope, realising this, wrote to Methuen in Madrid that 'the preservation of the commerce between the kingdoms of Great Britain and Spain was one of the chief motives which induced our two Royal predecessors to enter into the late long expensive war, and one of the principal benefits expected by our people from the conclusion of a peace.' There were two obstacles to the fulfilment of this policy. Firstly, the British merchants were far more concerned with what they wrongly believed to be the very lucrative trade with the Spanish-American colonies. As a result of this widely held belief, the Treaty of Utrecht had granted the English merchants the *asiento de negros*, i.e. the privilege of supplying the Spanish colonies with a maximum of 4,800 negroes for the next thirty years and the right of sending a ship full of merchandise

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to the annual fair of Porto Bello. The native population which worked the gold and silver mines was neither big enough nor industrious enough to meet Spanish labour needs. Thus a trade in West African negroes had commenced, and it was for this trade, originally held by the Genoese and later granted to the French, that the British diplomats had worked at Utrecht. In fact, the trade with Old Spain was more profitable. The second snag arose out of the fact that the Spaniards regarded the return of Gibraltar, conquered by the English in 1704, as an essential preliminary to real friendship between the two countries. Nevertheless, Stanhope persevered and was rewarded by the news in 1715 that a new and more favourable commercial treaty had been arranged with Spain. Next year, the Asiento treaty was also revised in Britain's favour.

The European situation thus favoured an Anglo-Spanish *rapprochement* when Alberoni became chief minister. Despite his low birth and varied career, this Parmesan ecclesiastic had ability and foresight. More immediately, he saw that Spain wanted peace to bring about economic recovery and the rehabilitation of her armed forces. Ultimately, he may well have hoped for the return of Gibraltar and even for the elimination of British power in the West Indies. His mistress, Elizabeth Farnese, agreed with him, but there was always a conflict between her zeal for the greatness of Spain and her desire to aggrandise her own family. 'The absolute control over Spain,' Bubb told Stanhope, 'will belong to the highest bidder for the Queen's son. That is the grand and only maxim, which has never changed since I have been here.' Thus, Italy and Parma, whence Alberoni obtained for her the truffles, Placentian sausages, ravioli and wines which she loved, formed her main interest, even here, however, a friendly English fleet was an essential factor in the fulfilment of her plans. It was, then, with real sincerity that Stanhope had written to Alberoni in 1715: 'This stumbling block [i.e. the difficulties over the Asiento] once removed, I see nothing to affect the union between the two powers, which we in England think necessary for the tranquillity of all Europe.'

Yet this policy did not succeed. Before three years were out the English fleet had sent the Spanish fleet to the bottom of the Mediterranean and Alberoni, now described by Stanhope as the 'sole cause of the war,' had entered on his three decades of uneventful retirement. The immediate failure of Stanhope's policy may be traced to the growing friendship between England and France. Both Dubois and the Regent wanted to prevent Philip of Spain from ascending the French throne in the likelihood of Louis XV's death. Aware that England's prestige abroad had improved, 'the antique dealer M. St. Albin' (Dubois himself) met Stanhope at The Hague and opened up negotiations for an alliance. The actual treaty (which lasted nominally until 1744) was eventually signed on November 28th, 1716. A month or so later, the Dutch also became partners and so turned the Dual into the Triple Alliance. The Triple Alliance was Stanhope's greatest achievement, for it laid firmly the foundations of Walpole's foreign policy.

The treaty's immediate repercussions were less satisfactory. Stanhope had hoped that the news of it would tend to stabilise the gradually mounting tension between the Emperor and Spain. But he had forgotten Charles VI's besetting obstinacy, an obstinacy which made him continue to employ a Council for Spanish affairs characteristically presided over by a Neapolitan donkey-driver. At the end of the War of the Spanish Succession the kingdom of the Two Sicilies—i.e. Sicily and Naples—which had been ruled for some hundreds of years by the Spanish royal family, was divided, Naples passing to the Emperor and Sicily to the Italian prince, Victor Amadeus of Savoy, for services rendered to the allies. Sicily's future formed the main bone of contention between the Emperor and the Spaniards. The Emperor wanted to unite Sicily with Naples, whereas the Spaniards wished for its return to the Spanish empire. There was also a queer strain of Italianate patriotism in Alberoni which made him eager to expel the barbaric Germans from his native soil. The Sicilians themselves cherished a curious kind of devotion to their former rulers and would have liked to return to Spanish rule.

### *The Establishment of the Hanoverians*

So, to speak metaphorically, the bubble of trouble grew until it burst and left behind it the suds of war. The actual incident, neither for the first nor the last time in history, which started off hostilities, was incredibly trivial. A crochety and obstinate octogenarian, the Spanish envoy to the Vatican, Cardinal Molines, who had recently been appointed Grand Inquisitor, was returning to Spain. As he refused to go by sea, he travelled over the land route and was detained in Lombardy by orders of the Imperial governor. This incident had repercussions in every European court. Alberoni had not wished for immediate war his letter to Cellamare proves this. 'This sudden expedition' (the Spaniards were to seize Sardinia, then Imperial territory) 'has completely surprised me and . . . has upset the measures which I believed to be necessary in the interests of the Sovereigns, among which the first was to establish the maxim of the necessity for preserving peace for at least six years, to build up a good navy and secure trade, two points which I believe to be fundamental in order to restore to strength this poor languishing and prostrate monarchy' But the minister was caught up in a tidal wave of enthusiasm, emanating from the court itself, which he could not control. The hand which forced the war also, incidentally, sealed Alberoni's fate

Stanhope still hoped that better counsels would prevail and that peace would be restored. He did what he could to mediate. Dubois, that 'thin little man . . . with a blond wig and a ferret's face,'<sup>1</sup> as Saint-Simon called him, and the Imperial envoy came to Hampton Court Palace, where they agreed to accept, on behalf of their respective masters, the terms which the mediators had drawn up. The terms were adequate and even just, but it took more than the 'Quadruple' Alliance of England, France, the Emperor and Holland to damp down the newly awakened enthusiasm of Spain. 'Out of deference to my grandfather the King [i.e. Louis XIV] and in the interests of European peace,' the Spanish King announced, 'I acquiesced in the Utrecht

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 'goat-faced cardinal; ugliest of created souls, Archbishop of Cambrai, by favour of Beelzebub.'

### *Cape Passaro*

treaties which were dictated to me by a handful of private individuals I have no desire to submit a second time to their dictation, since God has put me in a position of independence, where I need no longer bow under the yoke of my enemies, to the shame, scandal and utter indignation of my subjects'

Stanhope's policy now took a step forward and evolved along two paths. A British fleet under the command of Sir George Byng was ordered to the Mediterranean, ostensibly to guard British interests there, actually to thwart a possible Spanish attack on the island of Sicily. Although the City companies, and the South Sea Company in particular, disapproved of Byng's expedition, British opinion had become much more anti-Spanish in recent months, probably because of the apparent breakdown of the commercial treaty of 1715. After he had given Byng his sailing orders (Byng sailed on June 17th, 1718), Stanhope himself left for Madrid with the intention of trying to bring about peace through personal contact. His honesty is suspect, for he must have known that Byng might come into conflict with the Spanish fleet. It is probable that he believed that mediation supported by force was likely to succeed better than words alone. He arrived at Madrid on August 12th, the day after (though the news did not reach the city until after Stanhope's departure, a fortnight later) Byng had sunk the Spanish fleet off Cape Passaro. 'Should you be directed,' wrote Mr. Secretary Craggs on July 25th previously, 'to attack the Spanish fleet, you should waste no time on single ships, but try with the first blow to destroy their entire fleet.' This Byng had accomplished.

There were fourteen sail of men-o'-war  
We made captive that day,  
Seven sail we sank and burned, boys;  
But the rest, they ran away,

ran a contemporary versifier's account of Cape Passaro. It is difficult, impossible to justify Stanhope's action and easy to sympathise with Alberoni's intense indignation.

It is only when one remembers that Stanhope's real object was to end the war that a glimmer of light can be perceived. For

### *The Establishment of the Hanoverians*

although Cape Passaro did not immediately end hostilities, it did at least prepare the way for a general pacification. With infinite patience and skill, Stanhope managed to persuade France to follow Britain's example by declaring war against Spain. All Alberoni's diplomatic skill and military preparedness availed him nothing. Detested and distrusted by the enemy, no longer possessing the confidence of Elizabeth Farnese, he was dismissed from office on December 5th, 1719, a scapegoat for a war to which he had only given a grudging approval.

His fall made a general pacification a much easier matter, though the events of the next few months might have seemed to justify his prophecies. For the Emperor and the English were quarrelling over the Imperial treatment of German Protestants and, a more potent cause of anxiety, over the Emperor's plan for an East India Company. Stanhope's diplomatic sense alone saved the Quadruple Alliance from ruin and brought its objects to fulfilment. While he visited Paris, his friend, Sir Luke Schaub, went to Madrid with the same purpose and the same success. Spain accepted the peace terms prepared some months ago at Hampton Court '*pure et plene nullaque adhibita reservatione.*' (February 17th, 1720)

Thus, in a sense at least, Stanhope's career as a diplomat was crowned with success. England's prestige abroad, so low in 1714, had been greatly increased during his tenure of office. The ministry had inherited the legacy of dissatisfaction and deception which the Treaty of Utrecht had caused. Our former allies, Savoy, the United Provinces, Charles VI, and sundry German princes, had felt aggrieved at our betrayal of their interests. The French Huguenots and the Spanish Catalans were embittered at the deception by which they suffered. The Emperor still claimed the Spanish throne. The Jacobites were intriguing with some success at every European court. The winds of war blew from every direction. Stanhope was unable to prevent war, but at least he reduced its possible duration and consequent savagery. He erected, despite his apparent failure in northern waters, a system of alliances which prevented the

### *The South Sea Company*

outbreak of a major war until the fourth decade of the century. Furthermore, although he was a soldier, perhaps because he was a soldier, peace was his final objective, a peace necessary for retrenchment and recovery and, even though of this he may have been unconscious, for the preservation of European culture. All this he had achieved, only to be confronted with a great domestic crisis, the South Sea Bubble.

#### *5 The South Sea Bubble*

The Whig ministry, presided over by Stanhope, already weakened by its internal divisions, was finally brought to its knees by the series of events commonly known as the South Sea Bubble. There had been a very close association between the Whig party and the mercantile interests since the closing years of the seventeenth century; both the Bank of England and the newly chartered East India Company had originated under the patronage of Whig administrations. It is almost certain that neither the House of Hanover nor the Whig party could have held office if there had not been this close contact between the politicians and the banking and commercial circles of the City.

The connection between the South Sea Company and the government illustrates this point admirably. The South Sea Company originally arose out of the moderate Tory, Robert Harley's eagerness to gain the support of the moneyed classes and to finance the war against France. By his scheme (of 1711), the newly founded South Sea Company agreed to take over £9,000,000 of the national debt in return for a monopoly over the trade to South America. The Treaty of Utrecht naturally led to a diminution and re-definition of its privileges, but both its capital, no less than £11,000,000 by 1719, and reputation with the commercial public were prodigious. Actually, its commercial activities were yet slight. Although it had acquired the right to send a ship yearly to Porto Bello, the first ship, the *Royal Prince*, did not sail until 1717 nor the second until 1723. Meanwhile,



### *The Establishment of the Hanoverians*

its directors sought to use its 'fund of credit' through an ambitious scheme for ridding the country of what was then regarded as an uneconomic burden, the national debt. The scheme, which, it was hoped, would increase the Company's reputation as well as enrich the country and the directors, was designed to incorporate the national debt, then £51,000,000, in the Company's own capital, to pay off £7,000,000 of this at once and to receive from the government a gradually reduced interest on the rest which would reach ground-level at four per cent. in 1727. The Commons questioned the wisdom of empowering the South Sea Company to initiate the scheme without receiving other offers. The Bank of England accordingly intervened with a scheme which had Walpole's support. Its sole effect was to raise the price which the South Sea Company was compelled to pay. The Commons, some of whom had been bribed by the Company's friends, accepted the Company's proposals.

There was nothing essentially disreputable about the scheme, which had the backing of the government, but, as Walpole foresaw, it was financially unsound. There was bound to be an enormous inflation in the price of the Company's stock which would affect and unsettle the whole stock market. Nevertheless, its grandiose objects and the self-confidence of politicians and business men alike gave it a universal attraction. Partly, too, like the semi-fantastic schemes initiated by the Scotch financier, John Law, in France at the same time, the scheme appealed by its very boldness to the gambling instinct which was so familiar a characteristic of eighteenth-century life. Men of all kinds, conditions and purses, including Walpole himself (though he sold at the right moment and made a fortune), began to buy the shares of the Company, which soon rose to fantastic heights, rising from 150 per cent. in January, 1720, to 1,000 per cent. in August. In May, the Norfolk squire, James Windham, wrote to his brother, 'I am glad you have disposed of my horses, for I have business enough upon my hands. I grow rich so fast that I like Stock Jobbing of all things'. The comment was representative of all England. Hundreds of other companies, optimistic, wild

### *The Collapse of the Market*

or palpably dishonest according to the business character of their promoters, were founded in the wake of the South Sea Company's apparent success. There were companies to encourage the 'growth of raw silk' in England, to develop woollen goods, to make sail cloth, to drain bogs in Ireland, to breed horses, to make starch, to smelt iron with pit-coal, to get gold from sea-water, to trade in hair for wig-making, to import diamonds and to furnish funerals to every part of Britain, as well as hundreds of other schemes for manufacturing or developing land. Many of these companies were over-subscribed at once, the nominal value of their stock in July, 1720, standing at £224,000,000.

Then the market collapsed. There was in this as in the story of all financial crises a weird fascination about the decline, slow at first, becoming more rapid and finally crashing to the ground. At the end of June, 1720—to be exact, on each of the six days from June 23rd to June 29th—the South Sea stock was quoted at 1,000 and, partly because of an attempt to corner the stock, the market remained fairly stable throughout July. Business rivalry led to the first signs of real panic. On August 13th the directors of the South Sea Company applied for a legal writ, *scire facias*, against four rival companies. The writ was intended to show their faulty legal foundation and so remove public confidence in them, but the South Sea directors had forgotten that the issue of the writ would cause a general fall in the share market which would affect all companies. There was an immediate decline. And 'the same persons, who speculated in these new companies, were holders of South Sea stock; and through their losses in the former, they were compelled to sell part of what they owned in the latter.' The decline proper, which began at the end of August and went on through September, was like a cloudburst which drenched all who stood through it. South Sea stock opened at 450 on Monday, September 19th, and a week later reached the low level of 180. The final crisis came on Thursday, September 29th. After this, the financial world took a deep breath and slowly recovered its self-confidence. But the damage had been done. Many hundreds were in the lamentable condition of which Colonel

### *The Establishment of the Hanoverians*

Windham wrote on September 27th. 'There never was such distraction and undoing in any country. You can't suppose the number of familys undone. One may almost say everybody is ruin'd, who had traded beyond their stock. Many a 100,000 man not worth a groat; and it grieves me to think of some of them.' In November he wrote again, referring to his unfortunate cousin, James: 'Poor Jemmy's affairs are most irretrievable, I doubt; and as to ye Misery which I think will attend this Affair, we do not yet see a hundredth part. Allmost all one knows or sees are upon ye very Brink of Destruction, and those who were reckoned to have done well yesterday are found stark nought to-day. Those Devills of Directors have ruin'd more men's fortunes in this world, than I hope old Beelzebub will do souls for ye next.' And 'Jemmy' himself had the last, pathetic word in a later letter: 'The Directors have brought themselves into Bankruptcy for being cunning artfull knaves, I am come into the same State for being a very silly fool.'

The collapse of the market was bound to have repercussions on the ministry which had been so intimately connected with the South Sea Company's schemes, as well as on the stability of the dynasty. 'The consternation,' wrote another contemporary, Thomas Brodrick, to his brother, Lord Midleton, the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, 'is inexpressible, the rage beyond expression, the case so desperate that I do not see any plan or scheme for averting the blow.' During the next six months the ministry simply disintegrated. Stanhope, alone untouched by the prevailing scandal,<sup>1</sup> died in February, 1721, and his colleague, Craggs, followed him to the grave shortly after. Sunderland, original exponent of the scheme, resigned, as did Aislabe, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. One man alone remained to restore public confidence, the one man who, though a member of the administration, had written and spoken against the scheme, one man indeed whom the public named as the man of

<sup>1</sup> But he died of a stroke brought on by a vehement defence of the ministry, which he had made in the House of Lords against a bitter attack on it for its part in the South Sea Bubble.

### *The Stanhope Ministry Assessed*

the hour. Robert Walpole. He had already presented a measure to restore public credit at the end of December; in the following April he was appointed First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, and so began his long tenure of office

The ministries in which Stanhope had been the most prominent personality have rarely been afforded the recognition they deserve. There are many reasons for this neglect. The events which stand out are more connected with disaster than success: the outbreak of the '15 rebellion, the Peerage Bill and the South Sea Bubble. Internal dissension rent his party, especially in 1717. Furthermore, Stanhope himself, able diplomat as he was, was primarily the first among equals and was often overshadowed by Sunderland and Cadogan. Walpole was much greater in every way and yet one feels that what Philip V of Macedon was to Alexander the Great, Stanhope was to Walpole. Walpole would have had an appreciably harder task if Stanhope had not laid the foundations on which he was to build.

Both at home and abroad the ministry had notable successes to its credit. When Stanhope took office in 1714 there was a very real danger that latent troubles might dissolve into civil war. He had defeated a major attempt to dethrone the King and, even if he had not made George well-loved, he had shown the upper and middle classes that it was to their interest to support the Hanoverians. He had done something to restore the prosperity of the country, for the comparatively short-term effects of the crisis of September, 1720, were as much a result of the healthy state of the business market during his tenure of office as of the common-sense excellence of Walpole's financial policy. Finally, in the field of foreign policy, he had restored the country's prestige and instituted a policy of peace and reconciliation which contributed to England's prosperity and greatness in the ensuing years.

## CHAPTER V

### SIR ROBERT WALPOLE, 1721-1742

#### 1. *Career and character*

The influence of geography on the formation of character can never be determined scientifically, but the luminous expanse of sky, the fertile lowlands, the wide heaths and wooded streams of East Anglia have produced a type of character essentially English and sane. And there always remained something provincial about Norfolk's greatest son, Robert Walpole. The Walpole family had lived in Norfolk since the Middle Ages. In the reign of Henry III Henry de Walpol held a knight's fee at Houghton or Houton, as it was then called, a village twenty miles or so from Walpol itself. And Robert, heir and rebuildier of Houghton, embodied the shrewd, almost earthy common sense which seemed to spring from the rolling ploughlands of his estate. Even his vices were commonplace and representative of his time. There was, it is asserted, a measure of personal and public infidelity in his character, a lack of scruple which often wrought distrust. As a practical man Walpole realised that government depended on the handing-out of bribes to the ruling class. Lord Grantham told Lord Perceval that Walpole had said that the 'world was so corrupt that men will not act without them.' No one will deny that this was regrettable but it shows, firstly, that what we call corruption was an accepted convention of political life and, secondly, that Walpole was only participating in a game that everyone played. Apart from the way in which he used bribery by office and money to gain adherents, he has been charged with enriching himself at the country's expense. There was the unfortunate incident of the forage contract. There were the offices which he handed out to his friends and relatives; his

### *His Character*

eldest son, Robert, received a clerkship of the Pells at £3,000 per annum, a post which he held for sixteen years before he was transferred to the more lucrative Auditorship of the Exchequer. But there was no politician of note in the period, the Pitts possibly excepted, who did not feel free to use his perquisites for his family and his friends. Walpole was then instinctively ordinary and provincial in his attitude towards politics

And one might add towards life itself. He aspired to fill his house with pictures and his library with books, and in neither did his taste justify his expense. Yet if Walpole was only a commonplace politician, he would have remained the country squire pure and simple, who opened his gamekeeper's letters before his other correspondence, indulged in a fine measure of port wine and told conventional bawdy stories over richly laden tables because, as he alleged, 'in that all could join.' All this Walpole did, but he still deserves to be called one of England's greatest statesmen.

His greatness was perhaps due to the very way in which his commonplace virtues and vices were magnified and apotheosised. His mind was orderly and practical rather than high principled. 'No man,' said Lord Herve, 'was ever blessed with a clearer head, a quicker judgement, or a deeper insight into mankind.' And Lord Chesterfield added in one of his letters: 'Sir Robert Walpole, who had ten times the business to do, was never seen in a hurry, because he always did it with method.' His faults cannot be glossed over, but he had a surer sense of politics than any of his contemporaries and probably deserved the title of the greatest House of Commons man in all its long history, which has often been bestowed on him. There was an essential wisdom in his policy which some historians have failed to recognise. He was, even in his most cynical and venal moments, a great public servant who had his country's interest at heart. He thought indeed of England in terms of the country gentry and the merchant classes but within those limits he served the country well. He was loyal to the two Georges whom he served, a great friend of Queen Caroline, and, if a difficult colleague, he yet attracted

### *Sir Robert Walpole*

the devotion of a large following in the lower House. He was not an idealist and his sense of reality, which was in many ways his leading characteristic as a politician, may have deserted him towards the end of his term of office, but he was a gifted steersman through troubled waters. Historians, who have criticised him as the lethargic minister who only cared for office and let the world slip from beneath his feet, have failed to realise that it was the sanctified common sense of his policy that established the Hanoverians firmly on the throne, enriched the country (so that it could win the Seven Years' War twenty years later), followed a policy of peace and laid the foundations of a system of government which, corruption or no corruption, still is ours to-day

Robert Walpole, third son and fifth child of a family of nineteen, was forty-five years old when he became head of the ministry in 1721. His father was a wealthy and comparatively cultured Norfolk land-owner, to whose estates Robert Walpole (as his two elder brothers predeceased him) succeeded while still a scholar of King's College, Cambridge. In 1701 he became member of Parliament for Castle Rising, one of the two constituencies which his family virtually controlled. Thus far his career was essentially provincial.

At the beginning of Anne's reign he became attached to the group of nobles loosely termed the Whig Junto, and soon took public office. Friendly with Godolphin, he became Secretary at War in 1708 in succession to Bolingbroke; his tenure of office was successful and revealed his 'punctuality in business, order and precision in accounts, great knowledge of finance and most engaging manners'. He fell when Sacheverell's 'squib' brought Godolphin down, and soon after he had to face the additional ignominy of a trial for corruption. It was alleged that he had given two contracts for forage to certain contractors on condition that they reserved a share of the profits for a friend of his, or alternatively paid this 'sleeping partner' £500 on each contract to keep out. They preferred to follow the latter course and sent the money in the one case to Robert Mann, and in the other directly to Walpole who handed it to Mann. Walpole was no

### *Townshend Dismissed*

more guilty than most of his detractors, but his powers of criticism had already awakened opposition. He was found guilty by 205 votes to 148, expelled from Parliament and even imprisoned, in relative comfort, in the Tower of London. His political experience indubitably taught him to treat his opponents roughly. Next year (1713) he re-entered Parliament as the representative of the market-town of King's Lynn.

The Hanoverian succession provided him with further opportunities for widening his political experience and enhancing his reputation. He became Paymaster-General and then First Lord of the Treasury. At the end of 1716, George I, convinced that Townshend was holding up the foreign policy which he deemed necessary to the security of Hanover, relegated him to the dignified obscurity of the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland. His brother-in-law, Walpole, continued to hold office while he remained at Dublin, but after Townshend's final dismissal he followed him into outer darkness. This shows that Walpole had a sense of personal and political loyalty, for there was no other reason why he should have stood by Townshend. More important still, it shows that there was already some intimacy between Walpole and the King, as it was on the occasion of Walpole's handing back the seals of office that George I passed them back to him no less than ten times in an attempt to stay his resignation. Horace Walpole, who records the incident, adds that 'the heat, flame and agitation, with the water standing in his eyes, appeared so strongly in his face, and indeed all over him, that he affected everybody in the room; and 'tis said that they that went into the closet immediately found the King no less disordered.'

Opposition no less than office revealed Walpole's strength. The bill for the Sinking Fund which was shortly after passed by the Commons was his creation. He was also the man who successfully manipulated the opposition to defeat Stanhope's Peerage Bill.<sup>1</sup> Like other members of the opposition, he kept in close contact with the heir to the throne and it was probably now that the Princess of Wales, who at first disliked him, realised his

<sup>1</sup> See page 89.



### *Sir Robert Walpole*

ability and determined to win his friendship. But he had no wish to lose the confidence of the King and, working successfully for a reconciliation between the Prince and his father, was rewarded with the Paymastership of the Forces (June 4th, 1720). A week later his brother-in-law, Townshend, took office as President of the Council.

Now the collapse of the boom, the chaos that followed it and disrupted the financial and political world, led to his re-appointment as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer (April 3rd, 1721). It is very doubtful if any contemporary, even in those days of ferocious gambling, would have taken on a bet that Walpole would have been holding the same office over twenty years later. But hold it he did, and there was much in his policy which redounds to his credit and affirms the existence of a fund of common sense.

### *2 Security measures*

Jacobitism was a bogey which Walpole used at the beginning of his long tenure of office to gain public support. In reality, there was no question of its failing strength. Men might drink to the King over the water in loyal manor-houses, High Church parsons utter loyal but treasonable prayers, Oxford undergraduates sing Jacobite ballads, but, after the collapse of the '15 rebellion, there was no reason to anticipate another rising. James Edward's own incompetence made Continental Jacobitism quite a useful but subsidiary tool in the diplomatic chest of the European courts. Walpole, innately shrewd as he was, may probably have realised this, but whether he did or not, he knew that the English public were ever alive to the possibility of Jacobite plots. They would give their support and loyalty to any government determined on their stern suppression.

Jacobitism could then be used to stimulate loyalty to the King and to intimidate the opposition. Whoever supported the Old Pretender was obviously guilty of treason. By subtle innuendoes

### *Security Measures against Jacobite Plots*

Walpole managed to cast the cloak of treason over many of his political opponents. The ever-present fear of rebellion naturally encouraged the trading class, whose prosperity depended on the maintenance of civil peace, to support the administration. A change of government might weaken the strong anti-Jacobite policy of the government and so bring to an end the era of economic content now beginning.

After he had rectified the disasters of the South Sea scheme, Walpole was therefore much concerned with security measures against Jacobite plots. In 1722 he was informed of a Jacobite conspiracy designed to overthrow King and government. George I was reluctantly persuaded to postpone his journey to Hanover and, through the arrest of one of the principal Jacobite agents, Christopher Layer, the tortuous nature of the plot was gradually laid bare. The usual ingredients, the usual misplaced optimism, gave Walpole an ideal opportunity to prove his strength.

Parliament suspended Habeas Corpus, a special tax was imposed on Roman Catholics and Non-Jurors, and Layer paid the penalty of his misdeeds, on May 17th he was taken on a sledge to Tyburn from the Tower, hanged, his head was fixed at Temple Bar and his 'quarters' were given to his friends. But there were more important fish in the pool. The plot enabled Walpole to strike at the Pretender's principal supporter in England, Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester. It was this eloquent and erudite prelate who had tried to get James 'III' proclaimed at the Royal Exchange on Anne's death. He was, within limits, an honest and able man, but quarrelsome and self-opinionated. He was arrested in August, 1722, but the evidence against him was so slight that the bill depriving him of his offices and banishing him might seem a miscarriage of justice.

In fact, Walpole's shrewdness had triumphed once more. For all his innocence, Atterbury was a constant correspondent of the Jacobite leader. His departure on board the 'Aldborough man-o'-war' for Calais forewarned his followers and imitators, and so saved the nation from a succession of possible plots. The remainder of Walpole's tenure of office was unmarked by

### *Sir Robert Walpole*

similar events, although constant watch was kept at home and abroad. Thus Walpole's security measures unquestionably went some way towards establishing the power of his party and its leader firmly in the Commons and in the country. 'It contributed,' as Lord Onslow wrote at the time, 'very much to fixing Mr. Walpole's interest and power with the King and manifesting fresh proof of his abilities and usefulness as a minister.'

### *3. Walpole's economic policy*

Many factors kept Walpole in power; corruption by itself played an insignificant part. He had to have the support of the King and Queen. And, above all perhaps, he had to have the confidence of the trading classes. Their loyalties were more fickle than those of the country gentry and their demands were more exacting. 'The landed interest,' said the Duke of Portland at a later date, 'would always produce him a rich fleece in silence; but the trading interest resembles a hog, whom if you attempted to touch, though you was only to pluck a bristle, he would certainly cry out long enough to alarm all the neighbourhood.' If, then, it was Walpole's primary object to gain the support of the merchant classes, it was no less his ambition to implement economic recovery and increase the country's prosperity. Despite some failures, he was admirably successful and left the country far richer and more prosperous at the end of his ministry than it was when he took office. That this was not only due to Walpole is obvious, but he must bear some share of the credit.

Walpole was no theoretician. His economic measures were founded on his own interpretation of current mercantilist thought. This was the view that the country which exported more goods than she imported was thereby both richer and stronger than her neighbours. But there was an elasticity about his interpretation of contemporary economic views which earned him the grateful thanks of the trading community. His economic policy was then an able exposition of mercantilism, adulterated by common sense

### *Walpole's Economic Measures*

George I's speech at the opening of Parliament in October, 1721, gives us the keynote of Walpole's policy: 'to make the exportation of our own manufactures, and the importation of the commodities used in the manufacturing of them, as practicable and as easy as may be; by this means the balance of trade may be preserved in our favour, our navigation increased, and greater numbers of our poor employed' 'We should,' he added, 'be extremely wanting to ourselves, if we neglected to improve the favourable opportunity . . . of extending our commerce upon which the riches and grandeur of this nation chiefly depend'

It was with the idea of fostering manufactures that Walpole made some important changes in the laws governing exports and imports. His policy may be summed up as the removal of impediments to export, availability of raw materials, guaranteed excellence of production and (again by regulation) low wages, all with a view to helping the manufacturer to compete in the foreign market and thus assure a favourable balance of trade. There was nothing specifically revolutionary about this policy. It was perfectly in accord with accepted economic views, but the direction of his policy illustrates his care for England's prosperity

Contemporary writers on economic subjects all emphasised the importance of protecting home products. Here again Walpole, acting in conformity with current practice, imposed tariffs to enable home industries to work without fear of overwhelming foreign, colonial or Irish competition. His attitude towards colonial trade illustrates this point most satisfactorily. Like his contemporaries he believed that the colonies' principal purpose was to supply British industry with raw materials and to increase the wealth of the mother country. The colonists were therefore encouraged to produce essential products like sugar and tobacco or naval requirements or raw materials for British manufacturers, which would benefit the mother country, solely, of course, on condition that such materials found their way to British markets. Goods which might damage British manufacturers, like American nats, were banned altogether.

### *Sir Robert Walpole*

These policies helped British trade and so made for contentment and prosperity, but they represent only one side of Walpole's economic planning. Financial stability was a necessary factor in establishing the regime. To this object Walpole brought all the shrewdness and ingenuity of his capacious mind. He had already formulated many of his ideas before the South Sea Bubble. The great chance now awaited him.

The two chief features of his Treasury policy are focused around the Sinking Fund and the management of the national debt. At the end of the War of the Spanish Succession the debt had reached the then maximum figure of £54,145,363, on which annual interest equivalent to £3,351,358 had to be paid. Contemporaries regarded this sum with horror, as a burden which diminished the country's ability to compete in foreign markets and as an impediment to economic recovery. As Chancellor of the Exchequer in Stanhope's ministry, Walpole aimed to reduce the debt as rapidly as possible. Hence the Sinking Fund which was accepted by Parliament in 1717. The Act setting up the Fund set aside certain 'monies arising from time to time . . . for the discharging of the principal and interest of such national debts as were incurred before the twenty-fifth of December, 1716.' As this money accumulated, the national debt was to be redeemed by Act of Parliament. When Walpole returned to power in 1721 he widened the scope of the Fund and used it to cover deficits in the revenue, caused by the reduction of taxation or extraordinary expenditure, as well as for its original purpose. He was able to do this because the principle of the Sinking Fund had persuaded people that the national debt was not ruining the credit of the country. If he had used the Sinking Fund as he had intended originally he would probably have achieved his initial object, but, as it was, the actual decrease in the debt wrought by the Sinking Fund was slight.

Yet the existence of the Sinking Fund helped to give people more confidence in the national debt. Previously it had been regarded as so great an incubus that a totally extravagant welcome was accorded to the Sinking Fund and to the plans of the South

### *The National Debt*

Sea Company for absorbing the debt and gradually paying it off. By the end of Walpole's ministry many people had come to regard the national debt as a useful investment and a concomitant of the country's prosperity. It was with the object of increasing public confidence that he tried as early as 1717 to reduce the rather high rate of interest. Within ten years the rate had been greatly lowered with the result that the annual charge and interest had been reduced from well over three to less than £2,000,000. This not only gave the middle class an investment in the debt itself, but also made the continued existence of the debt an object of policy. The Dutch were particularly interested in this. Commercial and financial contacts between England and Holland in this period were exceptionally close. Although the exact sum which the Dutch invested in the national debt cannot be given, it was so considerable that the government always tried to conceal the Dutch interest for fear it should be charged with surrendering the country to foreign financiers. The economist Malachy Postlethwayt wrote anxiously of the 'millions upon millions which the Dutch have invested in our funds [a government spokesman in 1737 gave the round figure of £10,000,000], so that we pay them above a million a year in interest.' The group of Dutch financiers living in London, headed by the Van Necks (Joshua Van Neck's daughter married a Walpole), were thus devoted to the Walpole interest and the economic policy which the minister represented.

Walpole thought that the reform of the fiscal system was absolutely essential to the country's prosperity and material well-being. His ideas on this were enlightened and practical but misunderstood. He held that taxation had a twofold purpose, to help pay for the expenses of government and to assist industrial and agricultural development. This necessarily meant a certain number of protective tariffs, because the country's trade had not yet developed to the extent that it could safely ignore foreign competition. What, in brief, Walpole wanted to do was to clarify the system of taxation and to make it both in its methods and objects as economical as possible.

### *Sir Robert Walpole*

The British system of taxation had grown up in a haphazard way. There were two chief direct taxes, on land and houses (based on the number of windows), both of which Walpole retained. To gain the support of the country gentlemen, he hoped to diminish and finally to abolish the land tax. He held that as land was only one among many sources of wealth, it was unjust to tax it too highly.

A great deal of the country's revenue came from indirect taxation, the excise levied on goods inside the country which was extremely unpopular and an incitement to smuggling, and the customs levied on goods coming into the country which, based as it was on the rate books of 1660, was both muddled and out of date. Walpole's measures for revising the system of indirect taxation were only partially successful. All his attempts to eliminate smuggling, now entering into one of the most glorious (or inglorious?) periods of its history, by making the customs laws more severe and increasing the number of officers proved vain. Nor did a revised Book of Rates and the reduction of some prohibitive duties offset the probable loss to revenue.

Aware that his success was at best only partial Walpole turned to the excise, for which, as the most general and equitable tax, he had a special liking. Actually the excise was extremely unpopular because it was most effective. He proposed to make the best use of the system by bringing all the goods upon which the excise duty was to be levied to a government centre or warehouse; here the goods would be retained until they were re-exported or sold to retailers at home. This system of bonded warehouses which would, Walpole hoped, defeat the smugglers, was introduced first in 1723 for a few products: tea, coffee, cocoa and chocolate. The experiment proved successful, as it aroused little opposition and became a fruitful source of additional revenue as well as a means of discouraging smuggling.

Ten years later he determined to expand the excise system to include wine and tobacco. He estimated that the savings would permit him to do away with the land tax and systematise indirect taxation. It would also be a great boon to trade. But he had not

### *Walpole's Excise Scheme*

counted on the opposition in the Commons which used the Excise Bill as a rallying cry for a popular attack on Walpole. If the hated tax was introduced, so ran their argument, no product would be safe from inclusion and no Englishman, in view of the interfering exciseman, would be able to call his home his own. Posters placarded the walls representing the excise as a hideous vampire sucking the life-blood of the people. For once the opposition, making good use of the popularity of both wine and tobacco, was too much for him. Although he had the complete confidence of the King and Queen he saw that discretion was the better course and so withdrew the bill after it had been read a second time 'I, for my part,' he said, 'can assure the House I am not so mad as ever again to engage in anything that looks like an excise, though in my private opinion I still think it was a scheme that would have tended very much to the interest of the nation'

Although Walpole had these setbacks, his general policy undoubtedly tended to increase the prosperity of the country. During his tenure of office, the government's relations with the Bank of England—his relative by marriage, Horatio Townshend, was a Director of the Bank from 1722 and Governor from 1730 to 1735—were very friendly. When he left office in 1742 the national debt was less by one-seventh than when he entered it. The country was growing richer every year. If figures are any proof, there had been a great improvement in the balance of trade.

	<i>Exports</i>	<i>Imports</i>	<i>Balance</i>
1720 ..	£6,910,899	£6,090,083	Plus £820,816
1738 ..	£9,993,232	£7,273,513	Plus £2,719,719

Walpole cannot take all the credit for the country's natural economic development, but his economic measures had done something to stimulate it. His foreign policy directed towards the maintenance of peace did something more. He was the best finance minister the country had until the younger Pitt took office.



## *Sir Robert Walpole*

### *4. Walpole's foreign policy, 1721-1731*

Peace was essential to the prosperity of the country and the security of the dynasty. War would cause heavy expenditure, increased taxation and discontent as well as an increase in the number of plots and conspiracies designed to overthrow the King. Walpole understood this from the first as he had been a member of the administration which endorsed the difficult foreign policy of Stanhope. He aimed to carry further the pacification of Europe along the lines which Stanhope had already laid down, without, however, binding himself to any too-well-defined group of powers. 'Power,' as he said, 'will always be fluctuating amongst the Princes of Europe, and wherever the present flow of it appears (especially in open and direct Violation of our Rights) there is our enemy, there the Proper Object of our Fears.' The Treaty of Utrecht had brought an exhausting conflict to an end. Walpole, as much as, probably more than, Stanhope, saw that all states were in need of economic recovery, and he hoped to preserve both peace and the balance of power. The extent of his success may be gauged from the events which follow.

For the first few years of his ministry foreign policy was in the hands of his brother-in-law, Charles Townshend<sup>1</sup> Writing to Townshend on August 3rd, 1723, he said: 'My politics are to keep from all engagements, as long as I possibly can. You'll forgive my sudden, and possibly very improper thoughts upon a subject that I am but little acquainted with, but I am mightily inclined to be cautious.' This implies that agreement between the two men was imperfect, but it was not until some years later that there was an acute difference in principle which led to Townshend's resignation. For the first few years they acted in close co-operation, above all eager to retain the friendship of

<sup>1</sup> Carteret was the other Secretary of State until disagreement with Walpole forced his resignation in 1724. Walpole and Townshend feared the growing influence which Carteret was acquiring over the King through his support of Hanoverian interests, and so manipulated his resignation.

### *The Congress of Cambrai*

France and Austria, and to prevent the renewal of war between Austria and Spain.

There were immense difficulties in a Europe that was still feeling the effects of a dozen years of bitter war. The ministry worked for peace by insisting that the conditions of the Quadruple Alliance, framed by Stanhope, should be effectively carried out. It will be remembered that this alliance provided for the settlement of various territorial issues in Italy and was guaranteed by all its four signatories: England, France, Austria and Spain; but in nearly every case, when it came to the point of fulfilling their written promise, each of the great powers made an excuse for postponing action. When the Emperor had first agreed to the Quadruple Alliance his eastern frontiers were still endangered by the marauding Turkish armies, but now, since the Treaty of Passarowitz had ended the Turkish war, the threat was less and the Emperor proportionately less accommodating. As feudal overlord of the two Italian duchies of Parma and Tuscany, the succession to which the Quadruple Alliance had settled on Elizabeth Farnese's son, Don Carlos, it was his duty to invest Don Carlos with authority and give permission to his troops to enter the territory. He constantly put off this moment and prevaricated about his intentions. France and Britain tried to get his consent by acting on Spain's behalf at a series of discussions held at Cambrai, but far more attention was paid to the 'precedence to be accorded to their several cooks and lackeys' than matters of higher moment, and the problem was as unsolved at the end of the Congress as it had been at the beginning.

It was at this juncture that the Spanish government, controlled by the masterful Elizabeth Farnese, decided to break through the cords of conventional diplomacy by making a unilateral agreement with the court of Vienna. The Spanish envoy dispatched to bring this about, was a curious, unscrupulous adventurer with a streak of ability a certain Baron Ripperda, a Dutch Protestant who had been converted to Roman Catholicism and had gained the goodwill of Alberoni. He was instructed to contact the Imperial authorities and bring about a satisfactory

*Sir Robert Walpole*

agreement with them over the investiture of Don Carlos by proposing the marriage of Don Carlos and his brother, Don Felipe, with the two Imperial princesses. His initial reception at Vienna was cool and it is probable that his mission would have failed if relations between France and Spain had not at this moment become strained to breaking point.

The incident which led to the breach was personal and even trivial, but it shows the way in which personal considerations still governed the course of European diplomacy and the fate of nations in the eighteenth century. In 1721 the French and Spanish governments reaffirmed their friendship by betrothing the eleven-year-old King Louis XV of France to the four-year-old Spanish princess. The princess was later sent to France to be educated in order that she might be coached in the art of being Queen of France, a function which, it must be confessed, if the careers of Maria Teresa, Maria Leszczyńska and Marie Antoinette are any indication, it is not ordinarily given to mortals to perform with any degree of success. In February, 1725, Louis, now fifteen years old, of marriageable age, and never robust in health, had a serious illness from which some expected, and hoped, that he would never recover. The marriage project had been originally arranged by Orleans in the belief that the King might die before the marriage could be consummated and that the throne would then pass to his own family. Orleans, himself dead, had been succeeded as Regent by the Duke of Bourbon, an unattractive man of whom Barbier once wrote: 'It is known that he has no common sense, nor any experience in public affairs, which is melancholy in such a situation.' Bourbon in his turn wanted to marry the King to his own sister (Mlle. de Vermandois) so that an heir of his own blood might be born as soon as possible.<sup>1</sup> With incomparable tactlessness he returned the Spanish princess to Madrid without as much as a decent apology. The indignant parents naturally regarded the whole proceedings as a direct insult and, recalling their ambassador

<sup>1</sup> In fact Louis XV was married to Maria Leszczyńska, the daughter of Stanislaus, an ex-King of Poland.

### *Ripperda and the Treaties of Vienna*

from Paris, sent far more extensive instructions to Ripperda in Vienna.

This all fell in extraordinarily well with Ripperda's own plans. On April 30th, 1725, he informed his royal mistress that three favourable treaties had been concluded with the Emperor. The first brought about Philip V's recognition of the rather fantastic Pragmatic Sanction, the document which was intended to safeguard the succession of the Emperor's daughter, Maria Teresa, to his hereditary dominions by a system of European guarantees, which were not in fact worth the paper they were written on. The two other treaties do not appear to have been particularly useful to Spain but they were made to appear so. The Emperor agreed to help Spain, by words rather than by force, recover Gibraltar and Minorca from England, while Spain gave the Emperor preferential treatment in trade and promised to support the Ostend trading company which he had just started.

The news of the treaties caused a great ferment throughout Europe. They appeared far more threatening to contemporaries than they do to us. This was in part the result of the spectacular and curious character of Ripperda himself. He had all the adventurer's gift for creating an atmosphere and he used it to such good effect that Britain and France both felt that there must be secret clauses in the treaties specifically directed against them. The British, always conscious of the Jacobite bogey, believed that the treaties made provision for the support of the Old Pretender at Madrid and Vienna; such indeed was the purport of the information which the British ambassador in Madrid sent home to Walpole and Townshend. The treaties renewed at Paris the threat of encirclement which haunted the minds of all French statesmen from the time of Charles V to the age of Hitler and General Franco. Finally the British were greatly disturbed by the more concrete threat to British commerce opened up by Imperial and Spanish support for the Ostend Company.

Until the foundation of the Ostend Company there was no conflict between the economic interests of Vienna and London

*Sir Robert Walpole*

Now the situation had changed. The Emperor, whose mind was ever attracted by schemes, however chimerical, for filling the Imperial treasury, had been fascinated by a project for exploiting the riches of the Orient, propounded by a Scotch adventurer, John Ker, and his English colleague, John Colebrooke. This had resulted, late in 1722, in the foundation of the 'Imperial and Royal Company of the Austrian Low Countries with trading rights to the Indies, China and Africa.' English and Dutch merchants were both offended by the intervention of the Imperial interloper into the profits of territories which they had hitherto regarded as their own special fields of exploitation. 'I shall only add,' wrote one pamphleteer in 1726, 'that if this Company be not destroy'd, ours must be ruin'd. . . . And that, if the House of Austria become Mistress of Navigation, she will get Trade into her Power; and by consequence, Riches; and, if I may say so, will have the World at her Beck; and then, the Liberties of Europe will soon be no more, and the Protestant religion be destroy'd.' Such fears were really groundless, but they show the trend of the contemporary reaction to the Ostend Company. The news of Ripperda's activities in Vienna only stimulated such fears and rising wrath.

The threat of the treaties of Vienna required, as Townshend saw, some reorientation of British foreign policy. Accompanying George I on his visit to Hanover, he started to build up as strong a coalition of friendly powers as possible to check the Spanish and Austrian threat to British trade, and to uphold the balance of power in Europe. On September 3rd, 1725, Prussia, France and Great Britain—and later the Dutch, the Swedes and the Danes as well as various German princes—concluded the Treaty of Hanover to check the wanton ambition of the Emperor and his Spanish ally. The three signatories agreed to guarantee the integrity of each other's dominions and to come, if occasion demanded, to the aid of any one of the three. Walpole's opponents accused him of making a treaty in the interests of Hanover, 'to engage,' as the stout old Tory, Sir William Shippen, put it, 'in a war for the defence of His Majesty's dominions in Germany,'

### *The Fall of Ripperda*

but the Treaty was quite as clearly designed to defend British trade against the Spaniards as to defend Hanover against the Emperor or the Czar.

Two months later Ripperda managed to consolidate his existing gains by a more definite agreement with the Emperor. A secret treaty, so well-kept a secret that historians were unaware of its existence until 1843, was signed which was more far-reaching in its conclusions and implications. The dismemberment of France following a general war seems to have been the ultimate object of the treaty makers. More immediately, the Emperor agreed to the marriage of Don Carlos with his heiress, the Archduchess Maria Teresa, on condition that Spain continued to support the Ostend East India Company. This project, which never came to fruition, constitutes one of the most interesting 'Ifs' of history, for Maria Teresa eventually became Empress and Carlos the King of Spain, the fear that the French politicians cherished of the revival of Charles V's empire may have been more real than they themselves realised. Furthermore, this anti-British coalition was now enhanced by the addition of Russia and Frederick William of Prussia (who deserted the English, partly because he detested George I and partly because he thought that the Emperor would help him to secure the duchies of Julich and Berg—a foolish misapprehension). The diplomatic history of this period is a record of triviality and futile statesmanship, for the Treaty of Vienna, which appeared so threatening, was more of a chimera than a reality.

The fall of Ripperda in 1726 did not halt the trend of events, even if it had important consequences. Ripperda had been loaded with honours on his return to Madrid in December, 1725, honours which did much to expand the natural arrogance of his adventurous spirit. But his administration increasingly revealed his incompetence, hitherto concealed by a string of good luck, and made him equally repugnant to the Austrian ambassador and the Spanish sovereigns. The British had sent Admiral Hosier to Porto Bello to prevent the treasure galleons from reaching

*Sir Robert Walpole*

Spain, and this in its turn had made it impossible for Ripperda to pay the Emperor the subsidies which he had promised him. Ripperda's dismissal (May, 1726), made the more ignominious by the fact that he had to take refuge in the house of the British ambassador, had important results. It made possible without loss of prestige the dismissal of the French Regent, the Duke of Bourbon, whose muddling and impolitic policy had led to the breakdown of Franco-Spanish friendship. While Ripperda remained in office the King could not afford to dismiss Bourbon, nor could there be any real improvement in the relations between the two countries until Bourbon went. His successor, the King's septuagenarian tutor Cardinal Hercule de Fleury, was a man of a very different type.

Fleury's advent to power was important. He was pacific, shrewd and patriotic. His courtesy and inscrutability gave the impression that he was far more simple and accommodating than he really was. He believed, like Walpole, that Europe, and France in particular, needed peace. As Pope wrote in his *Imitations of Horace*: 'Peace is my dear delight—not Fleury's more.'

An Anglo-French understanding was therefore temporarily in the best interests of France. At the same time, Fleury was eager to detach Spain from the Emperor, and held that in fact a Franco-Spanish concord was equally necessary and far more natural. He thus worked with all the marked ability at his command to bring about what time showed to be mutually contradictory policies. He remained friendly with Walpole's brother, Sir Horatio, the British ambassador in Paris, and dissuaded the more bellicose of the British ministers, including Townshend, from following too avowedly hostile a policy towards Spain. On the other hand, as the fall of Ripperda eventually initiated a reaction against the controlling hand of Austria in Spain, he was able to work fruitfully for a reconciliation between the two natural allies, France and Spain. Thus, as far as Walpole was concerned, Fleury helped to bring his peace policy to fruition at the same time as he moved the balance of power, step by step, more and more in France's favour. All this was implied

### *Fleury*

in the fall of that colourful and rather pathetic adventurer, Ripperda.

As yet, however, these implications lay in the future, and Ripperda's disappearance from the diplomatic scene made relatively little difference. His successor in Spain was the Austrian ambassador, Marshal Königsegg. In England, the government was already making preparations for a war which Hosier's expedition to Porto Bello seemed to have made inevitable. In February, 1727, Spanish troops under the incompetent Count de las Torres began the siege of Gibraltar to the tune of insulting language from the Emperor. Fleury refused, however, to recognise that this was really a breach of the Treaty of Hanover, and what had once threatened to end with a 'bang,' ended not with a bang but a 'whimper.'

For no single European statesman really wanted a general war in 1727. The final success of Fleury's own policy depended on the immediate pacification of Europe. Elizabeth Farnese of Spain saw that Spain's resources were insufficient for a long struggle, and that the Austrian alliance was unpopular. The Emperor's bellicosity varied in proportion to the fullness of his exchequer, which Hosier's blockade had made perilously empty. In England, there was increasing dissension between Walpole and Townshend. Walpole had been educated in the anti-French, pro-Imperial school of Stanhope and watched the bellicose course which Townshend's policy seemed to be taking with distaste. From this time onwards, Walpole took an increasing interest in the conduct of foreign policy and brought pressure to bear on the decisions taken at the Cabinet table.

The promised pacification of Europe was spread over four years. It began with the acceptance of the preliminaries of peace in 1727 and ended with the second Treaty of Vienna in 1731. The preliminaries signed at Paris in May, 1727, at once removed the source of Britain's main complaint, as the Emperor agreed to suspend the Ostend Company for seven years. This was tantamount to abolition and at once brought about a relaxation of tension in European capitals, London in particular. This



*Sir Robert Walpole*

'pure, crude fact' was followed, after a great deal of wrangling, by the Treaty of Seville. England and France agreed to support Spain's claim to garrison Parma and Tuscany in return for the restoration of their commercial privileges. The Emperor still proved fractious. France refused to accept his cherished Pragmatic Sanction. Spain decided to repudiate the Treaty of Seville. It seemed as if Europe was again wending her way to crisis and war.

It was here that Walpole intervened decisively to prevent the promised peace from deteriorating into the anticipated war. In 1730 he parted company with Townshend. He had watched Townshend's policy with increasing anxiety since 1725. He thought that his brother-in-law was inclined to be too warlike and too precipitate, and that he did not pay enough attention to England's interests. 'If we enter,' he explained to Townshend on one occasion, 'precipitately into any engagement upon this occasion, we shall not carry the nation, nor perhaps the Parliament along with us, but if we wait and are driven into it, it will be seen and thought to be the interest of Great Britain alone made us engage.' Townshend was now one of the main obstacles to the renewal of friendly relations with the court of Vienna. His resignation was followed a year later by another treaty. Charles VI agreed, at last, to admit Spanish garrisons into Parma and Tuscany and to wind up the Ostend Company on condition that Britain accepted the Pragmatic Sanction.

Thus the policy initiated by Stanhope through the Quadruple Alliance had been fulfilled. This period of British diplomacy is like a maze, bemusing the mind and impressing the memory with a series of disjointed facts. This may be explained partly by the fact that it was experimental diplomacy. Walpole, and up to a point Townshend, were both mainly concerned with the complete restoration of European peace. This policy, so important to British trade and commerce, implied an understanding with France, our most likely enemy, and Spain, with whom we still traded profitably; an alliance with the Dutch, whose investments in British finance and commerce were of the

### *The Second Treaty of Vienna, 1731*

greatest importance; and with the Emperor, the old ally of England and of Hanover.

The Treaty of Vienna in 1731 seemed to fulfil all these objects. It accorded with French and Spanish aims, and had the sanction of the courts of Vienna and The Hague. Yet it was not without inherent dangers. The Imperial alliance might lead to action which conflicted with Britain's real interests. At the same time, the *rapprochement* with Vienna to some extent sabotaged the understanding with France, the next few years saw the rising influence of Chauvelin, the anti-British Secretary of State in Fleury's council. And behind the mere façade of diplomacy there were the national and economic antipathies, which appeared strongly in later years which might overrule the pacifism of however enlightened a minister. Walpole had, in effect, achieved his objects just in time to watch them gradually dissolve in the crucible of domestic and foreign politics.

### *5. The rise of the Opposition, 1721-1739*

While Walpole's political sagacity was as great in 1731 as it was in 1721, his position was not as strong as it had been in past years. Yet there were few signs of any organic weakness in the Walpolian regime. He still had the very necessary support of the Crown. After his recall to office he had received many signs of royal favour, for George I found him a minister after his own heart, trustworthy and careful of his interests at home and at Hanover. His death in 1727 momentarily weakened Walpole's position, as George II not only detested anything or any one that reminded him of his father, but thought harshly of Walpole for deserting his cause in 1720. But Walpole had an ally and a friend in the new Queen, Caroline of Anspach, an able woman who had long realised the real strength and indispensability of her father-in-law's First Lord. A curious 'Day of Dupes,' vividly sketched by the inimitable pen of Lord Hervey, followed. Walpole resigned. The seals of office were conferred on an amiable

### *Sir Robert Walpole*

nonentity, Sir Spencer Compton. All the world—who wanted office—paid court to the Countess of Suffolk, supposed mistress of the new King, in the mistaken belief that the mistress rather than the wife had the greater influence. The new leading minister found that he could neither make up the royal speech nor draw up the new Civil List without consulting his friendly but amused predecessor. With a grateful sigh Compton returned the seals of office which were once more handed back to Walpole. The world, still wanting office, eagerly trooped back again.

There was henceforward no real disagreement between the King and Queen and their chief minister. George II was a peppery and obstinate man but it was not only the fact that Walpole had given him an extra £100,000—the King was notoriously miserly—on the new Civil List which made him respect his minister. He saw that Walpole had the interests of the dynasty and the country at heart and that there was no other politician as loyal, experienced or able that the Crown could trust. His wife, who influenced him despite himself, was even more friendly, for they often discussed political and personal matters together. Caroline's death in 1737 was probably the greatest blow in the whole course of Walpole's career as a politician, for it removed a close friend and adviser and a powerful supporter.

Nor so far had Walpole been less happy in the Commons. He was in many ways the representative politician, a good strategist, a convincing speaker of a generally conciliatory disposition. 'I have lived long enough,' he told the Commons in 1739, 'to know that the safety of a minister lies in his having the approbation of this House. Former ministers, sir, neglected this, and therefore they fell; I have always made it my first study to obtain it, and therefore I hope to stand.' And until the date of this speech he had been remarkably fortunate. The means by which he gained control were questionable by modern standards, but he was only using methods which every group of contemporary politicians would have made use of to retain power. In any case, he might well have argued that a House in

### *Walpole and Parliament*

which he had a workable majority, that was generally amenable to his direction, was so great an asset in the conduct of policy that the method might be surrendered in the interests of the ultimate objective.

The upper House was equally accommodating, partly because the Hanoverians had made some new peers for political services, and partly because there always had been a powerful Whig phalanx, headed by Newcastle, in the aristocracy. Those prelates who owed their promotion to Walpole were expected to uphold his interests in the Lords as well as in their dioceses. His greatest supporter, until a difference of opinion led to a breach in their relationship in 1736, was Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London. Gibson trained his fellow prelates with admirable thoroughness to support the ministry and maintain the Hanoverians.

Nor at first was there much substance in the opposition. Although the word 'Tory' may be used loosely to define the various groups which opposed Walpole, no fundamental meaning can be attached to either of the words 'Whig' or 'Tory' in this period. Discredited by its associations with Jacobitism and lacking in leaders, the original opposition to Walpole was practically impotent. The semi-Jacobite leader, Sir William Shippen, was unimposing and furthermore had the disconcerting habit of holding a glove to his mouth when making a speech. Gradually different individuals and cliques deserted the ministry, sometimes from personal pique, sometimes because Walpole would not withstand a rival, more rarely from differences in principle. There was Carteret who was retired from his Secretaryship of State to the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland, thence to a period of criticism and alcoholism, as a result of which his obvious talents began to rust. Sir William Pulteney, later Earl of Bath, was another of Walpole's supporters who went over to the opposition. Chesterfield expressed his opinion pertinently: 'Mr Pulteney was formed by nature for social and convivial pleasures. Resentment made him engage in business. He had thought himself slighted by Sir Robert

### *Sir Robert Walpole*

Walpole, to whom he publicly avowed not only revenge, but utter destruction' His grievance dated back to 1724 when he thought that he ought to have succeeded Carteret as Secretary of State. Resentment rankled and, in spite of his natural indolence, he became Bolingbroke's chief ally in the campaigns to break Walpole's power. Beneath the banners of these peers small groups of camp-followers planted their standards and, as the years passed, grew in influence.

But there was one man who stood perforce outside political life and yet guided the opposition with that intricate ingenious cunning which so distinguished him: Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke. Where Walpole was stolid, consistent and sound, Bolingbroke was brilliant, sparkling, mercurial, an original and fascinating companion. Neither his plan for crowning the Old Pretender nor that for conciliating George I had in fact materialised in 1714, but his experience as an exile at the Jacobite court had convinced him that the key to the future was not to be found among the crowd of second-rate visionaries and adventurers that clustered round the Stuart court. 'I believe,' wrote Lord Stair, the British ambassador at Paris, 'all poor Harry's fault was that he could not play his part with a grave enough face, he could not help laughing now and then at such Kings and Queens' As early as September, 1716, he was writing to his Tory friend, the Somersetshire squire, Sir William Wyndham. 'My dearest friend, nothing can be so desperate as the circumstances of affairs, nothing so miserable as the characters, nothing so weak as the measures' He started negotiations through the British ambassador in Paris to secure his reinstatement, including his seat in the Lords. The result fell somewhat short of his expectations. Walpole gave him permission to return to England in 1723 on condition that he lived quietly and took no direct part in politics. To a man of Bolingbroke's temperament Walpole's patronage was insupportable. It made him appear so very much less dangerous than he thought he was. But it was not so very far from Westminster to Dawley, where he and his French wife made their home, and here, around this slightly specious, sometimes drunken

### *Bolingbroke and the Opposition*

but fascinating and cultured philosopher of politics, the opposition to Walpole found its true home.

His political ideas gave substance to the attacks of the opposition. Few people now read his writings, and those that do fasten their attention on the rather tedious *Letter on the Spirit of Patriotism* and the *Idea of a Patriot King*. Much misunderstanding has therefore persisted about the force and merit of his political philosophy. Within limits his analysis of the political situation was acute and accurate. He saw that the party terminology was devoid of meaning, 'it would actually be as absurd to impute to the Tories the principles which were laid to their charges formerly, as it would be to ascribe to the projector and his faction the name of Whig, while they daily forfeit that character by their actions'. As a result party politics have degenerated into a mere struggle for the retention of power. The victory has so far gone to the court interest of the Whigs, who only retain their authority by corruption, for quite clearly they do not represent the majority of the British people. Bolingbroke wished to release the nation from its tutelage to the Whig cliques, who had gained the support of the Crown, by restoring the independence of the House of Commons and by freeing the members from their subordination to the leaders of the party and the Crown. His objects were, in fact, impracticable, but his analysis of the situation is so masterly that it deserves greater attention. It at any rate lifted, in ideas if nothing else, the game of politics out of the arena of mere office-seeking and gave it the aura of idealism and patriotism.

Although he was not allowed to take his seat in the Lords, Bolingbroke hoped to coalesce the groups into one united opposition, for he realised that the Tories could only be saved by acting with the malcontent Whigs. Here his chief ally was Sir William Wyndham, whose dignified bearing and able questions, delivered, however, with a slight stammer, made many overestimate his real ability. His most important recruit was the heir to the throne himself, Frederick, Prince of Wales. His character and ability formed the centre of discussion; the

friends of the Crown and the ministry were contemptuous of both. 'He was,' says Horace Walpole, 'really childish, affectedly a protector of the arts and sciences, fond of displaying what he knew. His best quality was generosity, his worst, insincerity, and indifference to the truth.' In passing we may remember that while the King patronised Handel and his company, recently (1734) moved from the King's Theatre in the Haymarket to Covent Garden, Frederick supported the anti-Handel faction at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. Although the Prince had middling abilities and some ambition, his vanity made him the tool of politicians who wished to profit from the bitter relations subsisting between him and his parents. With that streak of cruelty which we have already noticed in his relations with his wife, George I had kept Frederick in Germany away from his parents—until death removed the old King from the scene. Naturally there was a certain strain on Frederick's return to England which rapidly degenerated into bitter and almost unnatural hatred. The opposition had not been slow to take advantage of this and to make Leicester House their own headquarters, here the Prince was accustomed, between his amours, to draw up lists of the Cabinets that he would appoint when his father was happily dead, and to distribute offices and largesse to the leaders of the opposition to Walpole.

The opposition aroused relatively little interest until 1733, although it was slowly reinforced by a galaxy of social and literary talent. Dean Swift, Alexander Pope, Gay of *The Beggar's Opera* fame, Henry Fielding, supported and patronised by *les grandes dames*, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, and Countess Granville, able mother of an able son (Carteret), among others, lent their talents to the destruction of a hated minister. Sarah's letters, spontaneous, lively and intelligent, rarely touch on political matters without an attack on Walpole. 'For a corrupt parliament,' she wrote from Tunbridge Wells in August, 1733, 'is all he has to support his unjustifiable proceedings, and a good one is all we have to save us from slavery.' Nor could the Whig pamphlets and journals compete in brilliance

### *The Craftsman*

or virulence with the phalanx of writers, to whom indeed we owe something of the distorted picture of Walpole that has often been handed down in the history books. Chief of these periodicals was the *Craftsman*, a journal started in 1726 and run for a decade by Bolingbroke and his collaborators. The tone of the *Craftsman*, and of the opposition generally, may be gathered from the first article of the first number: 'I have entitled my paper,' says the writer, 'the Craftsman under which general character I design to lay open the frauds, abuses and secret iniquities of all professions not excepting those of my own, which is at present notoriously adulterated with pernicious mixtures of *craft* and several scandalous prostitutions. It has crept into the Camp as well as the Court, it prevails in the Church as well as the State; has vitiated the Country in the same manner as it has poisoned the City. the mystery of statecraft abounds with such innumerable frauds, prostitutions and enormities of all shapes.'

The crucial year in the development of the opposition was 1733, for it was now that Bolingbroke and its other leaders were reinforced by the enthusiasm and vigour of a group known as the 'Boy-Patriots.' These new acquisitions were significant as well as varied in their composition. The Duke of Bolton, the head of the Poulett family, whose ancestor, the Marquis of Winchester, had been made a duke for his services in promoting the Revolution of 1688, stood for wealth and patronage. Philip Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, was different in type and character. Regarded as the epitome of witty, fashionable and unfeeling aristocratic society, Chesterfield possessed a mordant tongue, itself useful to the opposition, and one which to some extent concealed his political ability. More important were Cobham's 'cubs,' Grenville, Lyttelton and William Pitt. Sir Richard Temple, Lord Cobham of Stowe in Buckinghamshire, was an able, eccentric personality, built in character and achievements on the ornate, baroque model. He had been a good soldier; now he prided himself on his ability to select and patronise budding literary men and would-be politicians. George Lyttelton, his nephew, was connected by marriage with William Pitt



*Sir Robert Walpole*

and it was by his influence (they had been at Eton together) that Pitt was given a commission in Cobham's regiment, a cornetcy in the King's Own Regiment of Horse (after 1747 the 1st Dragoon Guards), now popularly known as Cobham's Horse. Lord Shelburne said of Cobham in his normal sarcastic way that he 'liked to spend his time clapping young men on the back and in telling stories at table which nobody else would tell in private,' but the political significance of Cobham's 'Boy-Patriots' in bringing about Walpole's final downfall cannot be over-estimated.

The Excise Bill of 1733 was that opposition's first real victory. It will be remembered that Walpole intended to extend the bonded warehouse scheme, introduced in 1723, to wine and tobacco. The opposition used all the material at their disposal to defeat this plan, and were so successful in inflaming public opinion that Walpole was obliged to withdraw the scheme. He revealed his intentions, says Lord Hervey 'with a sort of unpleasant smile, and saying "This dance it will not further go,"' 'That night and the following the city bells were wrung amid public rejoicings and bonfires in every street; Sir R. was burnt in effigie.'

Such rejoicing proved premature for the defeat of the Excise Bill was a Pyrrhic victory. The Whigs strode triumphantly to the top of the polls at the ensuing general election, partly because of the manipulation of which the Duke of Newcastle was so consummate a master. Outwardly at least Walpole seemed to be as strong as ever.

Nevertheless the first fence was down and in the years that followed many more were to follow, especially after Caroline's death in 1737. There was little real system or principle in the opposition's tactics or in their policy; they made use of every point—the subordination of the ministry to Hanover, a weak foreign policy, corruption—that came to hand to arouse public opinion. That there was yet something convincing and even reasonable about it may be put down to the growing importance of William Pitt. He had entered Parliament as member for

*' Thus Terrible Cornet of Horse '*

Old Sarum in 1735, and so soon made his mark as a member of the opposition that Walpole unwisely decided, as he put it, to 'muzzle this terrible cornet of horse' by depriving him of his cornetcy. The future soon showed that this at least was a false move. In honour of the event Lyttelton broke into verse:

Long had thy virtues marked thee out for fame  
Far, far superior to a Cornet's name,  
This generous Walpole saw, and grieved to find  
So mean a post disgrace that noble mind.  
The servile standard from the free-born hand  
He took, and bade thee lead the patriot band.

The 'generous Walpole' was compelled indeed to listen to the lashing tongue of the young and ardent member. Pitt's speeches in themselves provide an excellent summary of the main charges which the opposition brought against Walpole. Briefly he held that Walpole's lust for power was ruining the country at home and abroad. At home he aimed at the maintenance of his dictatorial position by keeping a standing army and through the use of corruption and bribery at election times. Abroad he followed a policy of *quæta non movere* which betrayed England's interests, lowered her prestige and subordinated her foreign policy to that of Hanover. 'Sir Robert,' wrote the exasperated Sarah, mindful of her husband's victory over France three decades and more ago, 'has been making France strong some years and spent as much of the English money in time of peace, as if the King of France could be depended upon as a friend. . . . He will certainly put the Pretender upon us whenever he has an opportunity to do it, and how soon we shall be swallowed up, God knows, but I hope I shall be dead before that happens.'

Gradually the opposition's power increased, more especially as the trend of events abroad seemed to suggest that there was some substance in Pitt's charges. The Queen's death was a great blow as it removed Walpole's most useful and sincerest supporter at court. Public opinion, even among the merchant classes who owed him so much, was veering against him. Foreign policy partly accounts for this. But the opposition was not concerned

### *Sir Robert Walpole*

with principle. Its sole object was to overthrow the ministry and reap the spoils of victory, and to bring this about it made the best possible use of events to stimulate and arouse public indignation against Walpole.

#### *6. Foreign policy of Walpole, 1731-1739*

Significant changes had occurred in Europe while the opposition to Walpole grew in England. The Treaty of Vienna, for which Walpole had been largely responsible in 1731, had unfolded, by implication, three different and inconsistent themes: Anglo-Austrian understanding, Anglo-French entente and Franco-Spanish concord. At best such combinations of powers could only work through a series of difficult and precarious balancing operations. Walpole certainly foresaw the probable difficulties, but he did not realise clearly that the clash might well come over events which had apparently little to do directly with Great Britain herself. It would then be a question of whether Britain would fulfil her obligations and of what the other powers' reaction to British action or inaction might be. It was here that Walpole's shrewd common sense to some extent deserted him. British interests were certainly not directly involved in the War of the Polish Succession which was to break out in 1733, nor even involved to the point of war with Spain, and yet in both cases inaction brought into being a damaging diplomatic reaction such as Salisbury's policy of 'splendid isolation' met over a century later. This is not to blame Walpole. He saw that peace paid more dividends than war and, like Mr Chamberlain at Munich in 1938, that it was better not to shed blood. But this was not the point. Walpole was living in an era when war was more frequent than peace. He should furthermore have realised that war is the life-blood of imperial expansion, and that even in eighteenth-century Europe national and economic rivalries were too intimately interrelated to permit his own nation to follow her own course without trouble and war. His

### *The War of the Polish Succession*

policy was reasonable enough, but the merchants and the opposition who played upon their fears may well have had a truer sense of what the history of the country now demanded.

The War of the Polish Succession was of crucial importance here. The question, as has so often happened in wars affecting the destiny of that unhappy country, had relatively little to do with Poland. The death of the lascivious Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, in 1733 provided a certain section of Polish noble opinion with an opportunity to break the succession of the Saxon line of Kings. War broke out between the two rival candidates, supported by the great rival powers. Augustus III, son of the late King, was the first claimant, supported by Austria. Stanislaus Leszczyński, father-in-law of the French King, who had already sat rather unsteadily on the Polish throne at the beginning of the century, was the obvious rival candidate, supported by France. But Poland soon ceased to be the focal-point of European diplomacy, as the war developed into a general scramble for territory and position. In the upshot, as one might expect, the protagonists divided the spoils of victory between them. Augustus III became King of Poland. The French agreed to recognise the Pragmatic Sanction and in return gained the reversion of the duchy of Lorraine, over which Stanislaus, the ex-Polish King, acted as a cultured but shadowy suzerain. Duke Francis of Lorraine, future husband of the Emperor's heiress, Maria Teresa, surrendered his duchy in return for the right of succession to the duchy of Tuscany. Finally Don Carlos, too good a man to keep down in any European quarrel, exchanged the two duchies of Parma and Tuscany, acquired at the cost of so much negotiation, for the more delectable and more backward kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

The Treaty of Vienna, completed in 1735 and confirmed in 1738, which elaborated these changes in the map of Europe, was as historically important for Walpole as the defeat of the Excise Bill in 1733 or the death of Queen Caroline in 1737. It gave point and volume to the charges of the opposition, for what the

### *Sir Robert Walpole*

*Craftsman* and its contemporaries had been hammering in over a period of years did now really seem to have some basis in fact. Walpole's foreign policy during the war had damaged British prestige abroad and had strengthened Franco-Spanish understanding. It will be recalled that the treaty of 1731 had made England an ally of the Emperor. When the treaty was put to the test by the opening of the War of the Polish Succession in which the Emperor was involved, Walpole backed out of his obligations. He explained that as the other signatory, Holland, with whom British financial relations were now so close, had remained neutral, this had justified England's non-intervention. It was believed, so Lord Hervey told Queen Caroline (who disagreed with Walpole over this question and would have liked Britain to have fulfilled its obligations to the Emperor, the hereditary friend of the Hanoverian House), that the Dutch would take Britain's trade if she intervened in the war. While breach of treaties was neither then—nor, apparently, now—so dishonourable a thing as it might appear to a moralist, there was little question that Walpole's unwillingness lowered British prestige and lost England Imperial friendship. From now on the figure of 'perfidious Albion' was held aloft by Anglophobe statesmen.

The other issue was more serious. It was clear that Fleury's policy of friendship with England and co-operation with Spain could not withstand the shocks of change indefinitely. Perhaps that assiduous cleric never intended that it should, for while he cooed, metaphorically, like a dove, he let his anti-British colleague, Chauvelin, roar like a lion. Chauvelin, who was a Secretary of State from 1727 to 1737, was convinced that France would benefit far more from rivalry than friendship with Britain. Horatio Walpole, the ambassador, writing home in 1730, opined that 'one conclusion may be drawn from what we see, and every day feel, that as far as monsieur Chauvelin can influence, we are to expect but little, and depend upon less, from the friendship of France, or any prospect of a future confidence or good understanding between us.' Chauvelin saw that Spain was France's natural ally (the French were incidentally our chief

### *The Anglo-Spanish Crisis*

rivals in the profitable trade with metropolitan Spain) and worked successfully for union between the two countries. The Family Compact, which had been signed in 1733, was confirmed by the vicissitudes of war to such good effect that when Walpole sought to take part in the peace negotiations at the end of the War of the Polish Succession he was firmly but politely elbowed out by Fleury.

Thus, on the eve of war with Spain, England had been obliged to stand aside and watch a struggle in which France managed to weaken England's principal ally, the Emperor, and to persuade the Dutch to remain neutral by abstaining from an attack on the Austrian Netherlands. The balance of power—such was Fleury's greatest achievement in power-politics—moved in France's favour. It may be urged that Walpole was right to take a peaceful line, but the morally right is not always in the case of a great and growing Empire the politically expedient. By 1738 the scales in the European balance of power had been turned against Britain, a Britain moreover whose armed forces were not ready for combat.

It was now that the Anglo-Spanish crisis arose out of the constant friction caused by the trade with the Spanish American colonies. The long American coastline, so difficult to protect, had afforded ships of all nations a good opportunity to partake of the profitable illicit trade. The Treaty of Utrecht had given the South Sea Company the right to send an annual ship to the fair of Porto Bello, and to supply the Spanish West Indies with negro slaves. This privilege was not in question, but it had undoubtedly been, and was being, abused by English traders. Both sides had many grievances. The Spaniards disliked the *Asiento*—the right to traffic in slaves to Spanish waters—and the other privileges and possessions, more particularly the fortress of Gibraltar and the island of Minorca, wrung from them by a victorious foe by the Treaty of Utrecht. They were equally dissatisfied with the way in which the British interpreted these privileges. The *Asiento* was a cover for a much wider trade. If the English complained of the way in which the Spaniards

delayed in giving the licence to the annual ship, the Spaniards grumbled at its frequent overloading. Add to this the quarrels over the collecting of salt on the Tortugas islands, over cutting logwood in Honduras and the interloping activities of unlicensed privateers from Jamaica and other West Indian islands who exploited the long coastline of Spain's colonies by underselling the legitimate traders, and it will be seen that Spain had more than a molehill out of which to make a mountain.

The British complained chiefly of the *guarda-costas*. In an effort to stem the stream of unlicensed traders the Spanish governors had licensed Spanish privateers to act as *guarda-costas*, with the right to search all vessels that they suspected of interloping. The West Indian merchants who suffered most from their activities argued that their behaviour should be governed by the treaty of 1667 which would have allowed them only to inspect the ship's papers; this, of course, would have prevented them from making any discoveries as they could not have inspected the cargo. The Spaniards still insisted on their age-long claim to be the rightful masters of all American waters. Such legal issues were arguments drawn from what was actually happening in the Caribbean and neighbouring seas. As it was impracticable to do more than curb the activities of the smugglers who came out from Baru and Garote and many another port, the *guarda-costas* simply examined every English ship they met, and usually carried her off for condemnation. It was extremely difficult to get redress, or an acquittal, as the Spanish governors were interested in the forfeiture which would result from a conviction. Nor was the situation eased by the tedious process of communicating between Madrid and the colonies. It was established that there were no less than 180 alleged cases of pillage and unlawful confiscation between 1713 and 1731. Among the ships so rudely treated was Captain Jenkins's *Rebecca*; the ship was plundered of its clothes, bedding and instruments as well as of the captain's ear. The *Daily Advertiser* informed its readers that a Spanish officer seized the captain's 'left ear, and with his Cutless slit it down; and then another of the Spaniards

### *Jenkins's Ear*

took hold of it and tore it off, but gave him the Piece of his Ear again, bidding him carry it to his Majesty, King George.' Jenkins delayed seven years in bringing his case to the notice of the authorities,<sup>1</sup> although he had at the time, as he told the House of Commons 'committed his soul to God, and his cause to the country,' and his ear to be preserved in a bottle of spirits.

These outrages caused mounting indignation in England. Even Walpole recommended Jenkins, whom he met at Chelsea, to the mastership of an East Indiaman. The *Craftsman* for July 10th, 1738, waxed particularly eloquent 'The barbarous Circumstances which attended this honest Man's Sufferings and their insolent Defiance of his Majesty, when they bid him carry his Ear, after they had cut it off, to King George must fill the Breast of every Briton with most lively resentment' It went on to deplore the weakness of an administration which permitted 'a few despicable ruffian Mulattoes and renegado Negroes' 'not only to seize the Property, but to maim and mangle the Persons of his Majesty's Subjects and haughtily order them to carry their bloody, torn Members to their Prince.' The merchant classes, formerly so attached to Walpole, were now eager for war with Spain, possibly because they were suffering from a trade depression, more probably because they believed that a successful war would lead to an expansion of British trade. The West Indian planters, fearful for their own monopoly of the sugar market, did not wish for the acquisition of further territory, but they were eager for a war which would lead to the destruction of the Spanish colonies. It is surprising, taking all these things into consideration, that the government had for so long been able to avoid war. Now the tempo and vigour of Pitt's speeches mounted to new heights, supported, as he and the opposition were, by the rising tide of public opinion. That neither the British nor the Spanish government really wanted war was no more to the point than the later realisation that, as a modern student of

<sup>1</sup> Some people asserted that Jenkins never lost his own ear but had it hidden under his wig. One is inevitably reminded of the charge brought against Athanasius in the fourth century.



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of these matters has put it<sup>1</sup>: 'the trade to the Spanish Indies carried on through Cadiz and the legitimate trade to Old Spain had been sacrificed because the illicit traders in the West Indies had secured the sympathy of the parliamentary opposition, and the protection of the contraband trade of Jamaica, Bermuda and New England had been made to seem the defence of the national honour' Pitt's attitude momentarily reflected the majority of the nation. 'Is this any longer a nation?' he said, commenting on the recently concluded Convention of El Pardo in the House on March 8th, 1739, 'or what is an English Parliament if, with more ships in your harbours than in all the navies of Europe, with above two millions of people in your American colonies, you will bear to hear of the expediency of receiving from Spain an insecure, unsatisfactory, dishonourable Convention? This Convention, Sir, I think from my soul, is nothing but a stipulation for national ignominy; a truce without a suspension of hostilities on the part of Spain, on the part of England a suspension . . . a surrender of the rights and trade of England to the mercy of plenipotentiaries . . . directly repugnant to the resolutions of Parliament and the gracious promise from the Throne' After this speech, we are told that the Prince of Wales kissed Pitt on the cheek.

Yet the Convention of El Pardo, of which Pitt spoke so strongly, was a sound, workmanlike piece of diplomatic negotiation which might have prevented war if the populace had not been so inflamed. It was carried through by Walpole and the able British representative in Madrid, Benjamin Keene, and by the leading Spanish minister, Quadra, to preserve peace. A joint commission had been set up to examine the mutual complaints of British and Spaniards, and to assess damages. The result was the Convention of El Pardo by which the Spanish King (January, 1739) agreed to pay £95,000 as compensation on condition that the South Sea Company paid him £68,000 they owed.<sup>2</sup> Now

<sup>1</sup> J. O. McLachlan, *Trade and Peace with Old Spain* (1667-1750).

<sup>2</sup> The original sum for damages which the Spaniards recognised as correct was £200,000, but they offset this by £60,000 for sinking the Spanish fleet at Cape Passaro, and £45,000 for prompt cash. The original British estimate had been £340,000.

### *War Declared, 1739*

there could be no doubt, as Pitt saw, that from the purely financial point of view this was an unsatisfactory agreement as all that it really amounted to was a monetary compensation of £27,000, nor was anything said about the all-important question of the right of search. Walpole, on the other hand, believed that once the Convention was concluded, a more satisfactory arrangement dealing with other questions in dispute could be negotiated between the two countries. In any case, he foresaw that matters could not possibly be improved by a long conflict with Spain and possibly France as well.

And yet war it was. The South Sea Company was unwilling to pay. Walpole, against his better judgment, carried forward by popular opinion within his own party as well as outside it, agreed to a declaration of war against Spain (October 19th, 1739). 'There never was a time,' wrote the *Daily Gazetteer*, 'when the People or Nation in General were more unanimous and eager to enter a War.' But the country's leading minister saw even then that the war might bring his long and successful ministry to a disastrous close.

### *7. The War and the fall of Walpole, 1739-1742*

The war met with the plaudits of the people. The Prince of Wales toasted the mob in a London tavern as the bells of the City churches rang out. It was indeed a symbol of things to come. Walpole was not a war minister nor had he laid down the foundations for a successful war. He had made no alliances with foreign powers nor vital changes in the Army or Navy. All that he had done, and this was vastly important in the long run, was to make the country financially and commercially strong enough to withstand the call of conflict. He should have resigned and yet he held on another three years. It is not difficult to explain this. Men who have tasted the joys of government are seldom willing to give them up, more especially when they realise that their opponents are merely waiting an opportunity to impeach

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them of 'high misdemeanours and crimes' But this was not the whole story. It must be remembered that before the days of Cabinet unanimity and party responsibility there was not the slightest reason why the First Lord of the Treasury who had acquiesced with reluctance in a declaration of war should resign. He still had the support and confidence of the King who had appointed him to office, and that was what immediately mattered. He was, too, a man of sufficient wisdom to know that there was no man as able as himself, to succeed him, among his own followers or among the opposition. Walpole may well have concluded that immediate resignation was unthinkable and unreasonable.

Nevertheless resignation would have been a saving grace. Begun badly, the war went from bad to worse. Ships were undermanned (Anson's ships on which he made his celebrated circumnavigation of the world were partly manned by Chelsea pensioners) and in some cases unseaworthy. The Cabinet itself suffered from divided counsels. Whereas Walpole was most interested in protecting the British Isles, Newcastle, scenting popularity, urged the dispatch of a vast expedition to the West Indies, but was typically vague as to what it should do when it arrived there. The advice of the Admiralty was more to the point: intercept the treasure galleons and blockade the Spanish ports. It was generally realised that the West Indies was the place where Spain was most likely and most rapidly to be defeated. But the plans for bringing this about were confused, muddled and mismanaged. If we conquered and annexed the Spanish colonies, there would be a tremendous reaction against us in Europe which would be obviously disadvantageous. On the other hand contemporaries believed, without justification, that the Spanish colonists, resenting a King of French birth and oppressed by the authorities of Church and State, were ripe for rebellion. The British should do what they could to encourage revolution inside the colonies and so enable them to free themselves. The men on the spot, the West Indian sugar planters who had influential friends in parliament, opposed this, liberation

### *The Growing Friction between Britain and France*

of the colonies would break their monopoly of the sugar market. They would have preferred destruction and conquest. The government's strategy fell between the two stools. The actual expeditions—Vernon's, Trelawny's, and Anson's—have some intrinsic interest, but except in so far as they increased public disquiet about the conduct of the war, they had little bearing on subsequent events.

Meanwhile the war was bound to affect our relations with our nominal allies, the French. Although Fleury had now broken with Chauvelin, the aged cardinal's opinion seemed more and more to be permeated with his former colleague's belligerence towards Britain, Horatio Walpole, writing to Queen Caroline in the autumn of 1737, commented that the 'old gentleman's weakness and tricks, which he has derived from Chauvelin, as if he had been bit by him, retaining the venom, altho' he has discarded the heart' Fleury had the undoubted support of the French mercantile classes, the merchants had long resented the hold which the British had had over Spanish trade. They welcomed the British declaration of war against Spain because it would enable them 'to substitute their own manufactures for the English, to give the Spanish Americans a permanent taste for French goods and to cultivate the art of imitating such English goods as were indispensable' Economic and political reasons swayed France more and more towards her colleague of the Family Compact. Similarly anti-French opinion had greatly increased in Britain itself. The British commercial classes were more and more convinced that France was winning the economic battle, and that a war with France could alone avert that disaster. They pointed to the way in which the French fisheries flourished at Cape Breton, to the inroad which French traders were making in the foreign sugar market, and to the expansion of French trade in the Levant and in India. 'Because the Incumbrances,' wrote Sir Matthew Decker in 1740, 'on our Trade at present have given the French so much the Start of us in times of Peace, that War seems absolutely necessary to obstruct their growing power.'

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The death of the Emperor Charles VI in 1740 increased rather than diminished the difficulties of the government, for it raised the question of the Pragmatic Sanction of which England, among other countries, was a guarantor. The young King of Prussia, Frederick the Great, who was devoid of all political scruples, saw that this was an excellent opportunity to round off his dominions by conquering the Imperial province of Silesia. France, her plans deflected from the maritime war which Fleury had been envisaging, concluded a treaty of alliance with Prussia in June, 1741. Britain agreed to fulfil her obligations under the Pragmatic Sanction to Maria Teresa, the heiress to the Empire and the victim of Frederick's unprovoked assault. In fact the alliance, which lasted technically until 1744, had been replaced by a state of war, and the Franco-British *rapprochement*, which had been one of the main objects of Walpole's policy, had come to an end.

The opposition, far from satisfied with the declaration of the war against Spain, unleashed fresh fury against Walpole's ministry on the ground that it was failing to conduct the war vigorously. 'Our time,' said Pitt in January, 1741, 'cannot be more usefully employed, during a war, than in examining how it has been conducted, and settling the degree of confidence that may be reposed in those to whose care are entrusted our reputations, our fortunes, and our lives . . . We are now to examine whether it is probable that we shall preserve our commerce and our independence, or whether we are sinking into subjection to a foreign power.' Grub Street was naturally more abusive 'Captain Hercules Vinegar,' writing in the *Champion*, ascribed all the country's troubles 'to the Craft, Power, and Insolence of one Man, a Man more obnoxious to the Resentments of the Public than any Minister who preceded Him,' who had 'gone beyond them all in adding Weight to Prerogative and in enslaving the People' Appropriately on the birthday of Admiral Vernon, the Tory whose achievements at Porto Bello had so unnecessarily dazzled the public, the City was illuminated and Walpole hanged in effigy.

### *Walpole's Resignation*

Walpole himself seems to have lost confidence, and even interest, to an increasing extent. 'It is your war,' he told Newcastle rather unfairly, 'and I wish you joy of it.' Horace Walpole, recording his impressions in October, 1741, mentioned that he who before 'was asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow, now never sleeps above an hour without waking, and he who at dinner always forgot he was Minister and was more gay and thoughtless than all the company, now sits without speaking and with his eyes fixed for an hour altogether.' The Whig majority in the election of 1741 was greatly reduced, and in January, 1742—although a subsequent vote of censure had been defeated—an adverse vote on the Chippenham election petition led to Walpole's resignation. So passed from office one of the greatest of the country's ministers and the most representative of her politicians in the eighteenth century.

## THE WAR OF THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION, 1740-1748

I. *The predominance of Carteret*

The fourteen years which elapsed between Walpole's fall (1742) and Pitt's rise to office (1756) witnessed at home the coalescence of a series of political groups all struggling to retain or attain office in the face of a gradually worsening diplomatic situation abroad. Here France, under the lead of ministers of doubtful competence, sought to fulfil what some called her political destiny and others French imperialism. Her lieutenants, more able than the ministers at home, consolidated their gains in Canada, India and the West Indies, and prepared to carry economic and political warfare into the enemy's camp. Meanwhile Austria under the rising star of that cold and courtly diplomat, Anton von Kaunitz, sought to preserve the *Reich*, the Holy Roman Empire, and to regain the territories which Frederick the Great had filched from her. Frederick, for his part, was equally determined to retain his hold over Silesia and to enter into friendship with whatever powers would subsidise him with men and money. While all this was taking place, British foreign policy was in the hands of Carteret and Newcastle, the one in decline and the other never fully risen. Thus until the rise of Pitt, British foreign policy lacked the stamina and foresight which would enable it to respond as it should to the aggressive designs of France. Nor in the same period is there any very apparent trend in home affairs. The phrase 'distilled Walpolianism' might well be used to cover the general administrative policy of those who were in office between 1742 and 1756. There is one exception: Henry Pelham's qualities were greater than contemporaries or some later historians have recognised. Apart from this, the situation appears generally

### *Carteret*

obscure, unconnected and even uninteresting. At the same time, these years form an essential link, politically, economically and diplomatically, between the age of Walpole and the age of Pitt

The bright, if declining, star of Carteret predominates between 1742 and 1744. He was the only outstanding man among the members of the ministry which took office on Walpole's resignation. The new ministry was still essentially 'Walpolean'. The Earl of Orford, such was the title Sir Robert Walpole had taken, ruled behind the curtain as he had ruled on the front bench of the House of Commons, it was he who had advised the King to buy over Pulteney and Carteret by the reward of high office to the obvious indignation of their former supporters. All the attempts that Pitt and the cousinhood made to bring Walpole low and to impeach him of high crimes and misdemeanours failed. Pitt used all his eloquence to persuade the faltering members that they were called the 'Grand Inquest of the Nation' so that they might enquire 'into every step of public management, either abroad or at home, in order to see that nothing has been done amiss,' and that Walpole's 'impunity' would be the 'source of many future miseries to Europe, as well as to his native country,' but in vain. At last, a committee was set up to investigate Walpole's rule, but its work was cut short by the prorogation of Parliament and it was never revived. The influence which Walpole continued to wield until his death in 1745 is a tribute to the position which he had made for himself in the nation, and to some extent an indication of his indispensability.

Even if the genius of Walpole continued to inspire the ministry, Carteret was the dominating figure. He was in every way personally overwhelming. His career was an essay in brilliant failure. Descended from a family which had migrated from Jersey at the time of the Conquest, he emerged into public life from Westminster and Christ Church, Oxford, handsome, courtly, a brilliant conversationalist, an excellent classic and a good linguist. It is said that by the time he was forty he knew all the principal languages of Europe and could recite the whole of the New Testament in Greek. Every prophet would have



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predicted that he had a most brilliant career in front of him, but, somehow or other, when he was at last faced with the problem of government he failed to create the impression that his talents should have afforded him. Even Chesterfield, who did not like him, admitted that 'when he dies, the ablest head in England dies too.' At twenty-five, for services rendered in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, he became Lord-Lieutenant of Devon. His next post brought him more forcibly before the King and government. In 1719 he was sent to Stockholm to negotiate an understanding with the Swedes and, although he had little or no influence over the final pacification in the Northern War, he managed, in the face of many obstacles, to retrieve the diplomatic position most skilfully. His abilities brought him the Secretaryship of State, but he and Walpole were not particularly congenial colleagues; he was involved in a series of obscure negotiations, designed ultimately to procure the recall of Sir Luke Schaub from Paris,<sup>1</sup> which brought about his own dismissal after scarcely three years of office. For six more years, until 1730, he occupied the post, sometimes seemingly reserved for able but disgruntled ministers, of Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland; he chatted with Dean Swift and indulged in irony at the expense of the great minister. After his dismissal in 1730, he spent the next dozen years of his life in opposition, such years were perhaps critical for Carteret. Bereft of any real object in life, he was inclined to fritter away his talents, to enrich himself with the sonority of Homeric masterpieces and develop that epicurean way of life that had from the start fascinated him. 'It is,' says Horace Walpole, 'difficult to say whether he was oftener intoxicated by wine or ambition; in fits of the former, he showed contempt for everybody; in rants of the latter for truth. His genius was magnificent and lofty; his heart without gall or friendship, for he never tried to be revenged on his enemies or

<sup>1</sup> Schaub was Carteret's nominee. Horatio Walpole, Sir Robert's brother, had been sent to Paris in 1723 to counteract his influence which had been weakened by Dubois' death, and by his failure to obtain a dukedom for the father of the French nobleman who was to wed the niece of Lady Darlington, the King's friend.

### *Reasons for Carteret's Failure*

to serve his friends' Yet his speeches criticising Walpole's conduct of the war with Spain had been vehement and masterly.

Thus it was that Carteret was called to power, power at last and power too late. While he had a firmer grip on the objects of foreign policy than any Englishman living, with the possible exception of Pitt, and a vigour in the conduct of the war that contrasted with Walpole's apathy, his actual policy too often seemed fragmentary and piecemeal. The division of function between the two Secretaries of State, accentuated by the fact that Newcastle was jealous of his colleague's superior ability, may in part explain this defect. 'Carteret,' says a recent historian, 'was confronted with the ridiculous arrangement whereby, while Austria was in his own province, Sardinia was in that of the muddle-headed Duke of Newcastle. He had no control over the latter's rambling effusions to Arthur Villettes, the British minister at Turin, as Newcastle luckily had none over his own to Robinson at Vienna.' But this does not explain everything. His policy was disappointing in its results, they so often seemed out of all proportion to the minister's display of energy. Carteret was extremely industrious; 'our able and mighty minister,' wrote an observer a little later, 'is fully employed no less than sixteen out of the twenty-four hours with pen, ink and paper.' But the amount of skill expended was not proportionate to the grasp of final principles that one might have expected a minister like Carteret to have shown.

The situation in 1742 obviously called for stern measures. Sir Charles Hanbury Williams satirically described it in verse a year later:

Who is there but the Lord above  
That knoweth what this nation's doing;  
Whether the war goes on with Spain,  
In which so many Britons fell;  
And what our fleets do on the main,  
The Lord, and only he, can tell.

The Lord knows how our army'll fare,  
We're governed by the Lord knows who,  
Our King is gone the Lord knows where,  
And the Lord knows what we shall do.

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No notable success had occurred in the Anglo-Spanish war since Vernon had taken Porto Bello, while the relations between France and Britain moved daily nearer war. 'If we suffer,' says a contemporary, 'France to continue twenty years longer in Peace, they will unavoidably, in the same Manner, steal into the greatest part of the Trade which the English are now in possession of.' As the British were fighting already as the auxiliaries of Maria Teresa of Austria, and the French were assisting Frederick of Prussia in the same way, the actual declaration of war was a secondary matter. The anti-British ministers who had gained an increasing ascendancy over the aged Fleury and the King were already forming plans for an invasion of England to coincide with a Jacobite rising in the north. Purely military considerations also placed England at a disadvantage, for the King's love of Hanover had made him agree to its neutrality.<sup>1</sup> Meantime, realising that the Convention of Klein Schnellendorf which had brought hostilities with Maria Teresa to a temporary conclusion was at best an armistice, Frederick prepared for a renewal of the war. No Cabinet could have taken office at so unpromising a moment.

Carteret at once took decisive and vigorous steps in both diplomatic and military fields. He was under no delusion as to the real enemy, France, and he realised that the Silesian question, and indeed the whole problem of the succession to the throne of the Holy Roman Empire, were irrelevant to British interests. French rivalry in the colonies and on the high seas, in the trade with the Levant, in the Mediterranean and with Spain, and in the West Indies, were the significant elements in the coming conflict. There was also the enduring question of the balance of power. This had been unsettled by the War of the Polish Succession which had had the effect of making France the virtual arbiter of Western Europe. The time had now arrived for the re-emergence of '*la gloire*' which had haunted the minds of French statesmen since the days of Louis XIV. The latent source of

<sup>1</sup> This had the effect of immobilising a number of troops who might otherwise have been engaged in keeping either the French or the Prussians in check.

### *Carteret's Anti-French Moves*

the consequent Anglophobia is not easy to come by; counselled by a whole clique of advisers and civil servants, it depended on the French view of the factors which have just been named. Of all English statesmen Carteret, with his finely welded diplomatic mind, perceived this most forcibly, and directed his policy accordingly. 'I will always,' he said, 'traverse the views of France in place and out of place; for France will ruin this nation if it can.'

Hence the vigour of the preparations which followed his appointment. What he wanted to do was to arrange a series of alliances which would re-assure Maria Teresa and thus pave the way for a negotiated peace between her and Frederick, and so eventually leave England in a strong position to deal with France. Carteret increased the subsidy sent to Maria Teresa by £200,000 and was able to persuade the King to abandon Hanoverian neutrality on the ground that this was what the electorate's interests demanded. He did indeed believe that the acquisition of Hanover, with its well-trained army, must inevitably encourage the Imperial forces, and this in its turn would prevent the control of power in Europe from slipping into the hands of France. On the other hand, his enemies, and even Newcastle, his own colleague, accused Carteret of subordinating Britain's interests to those of Hanover.

Next, with a view to counteracting a possible Prussian invasion of Hanover and to neutralise the French threat, he made a treaty with the Empress Elizabeth of Russia by which that somewhat flamboyant lady agreed to provide 12,000 men if England was attacked by a third power in her war against Spain. In return, England agreed to send twelve men-of-war to the Baltic if Russia was attacked by a third power in yet another of her periodic wars with Sweden. Then, once again, the two main combatants, Frederick (who agreed to withdraw from the war if he was allowed to keep Silesia) and Maria Teresa, were persuaded to sign the Treaty of Berlin, of which the Prussian King himself wrote much later '*le Lord Carteret fut le principal promoteur de cet ouvrage.*'

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This intricate diplomatic activity, as well as the greater resolution shown in the conduct of the war against Spain, soon had happy effects, and was crowned by the victory of the British, Hanoverians and Austrians over the French at Dettingen. It was here that George II fought and so earned Pitt's—unjustified—sneers, 'The French fired at His Majesty,' reads the account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1745, 'from a battery of twelve cannon, but levelled too high. I saw the balls go within half a yard of his head. The Duke d'Arenberg desired him to go out of danger: he answered, "Don't tell me of danger, I'll be even with them."'

And yet for all the greater success attending British arms and diplomacy since Carteret took office, a curious deficiency in his policy still remains; it was as if he had become so immersed in the niceties of diplomatic technique that he had lost sight of his final objectives. There were, for example, the protracted negotiations which he had initiated at Hanau between Maria Teresa and the Elector of Bavaria, Charles Albert, for whom French money and princely self-interest had recently gained the Imperial crown. The sole and, from Carteret's angle, the most unsatisfactory result of these negotiations, was the renewal of war between Frederick the Great and Maria Teresa. Or take again the negotiations with which Carteret tried to arrange an alliance between Charles Emmanuel, the ruler of Savoy, and Maria Teresa. These negotiations should have revealed, to a less-shrewd mind than Carteret's, the fundamental disharmony of Anglo-Austrian objectives, but he was now so involved in this dovetailing of interests that he completely overestimated the significance of the diplomacy he was wielding. But the immediate results of Carteret's diplomacy seem to have justified his careful planning. For the ruler of Savoy, by the Treaty of Worms (1743), received useful additional territory from Genoa and Austria, and entered into full alliance with the enemies of France.

Yet it is extremely doubtful whether the Treaty of Worms was as successful as at first sight it appeared to be. That the ruler of

### *Carteret's Diplomatic Manoeuvres*

Savoy and Sardinia was now an enemy of Spain and France naturally strengthened British naval power in the Mediterranean as well as the Hapsburg cause in Italy itself. Against this, there was the doubtful wisdom of promising to pay a heavy money subsidy of £200,000 to Charles Emmanuel of Savoy, and of supporting a policy which in the long run was designed more to enhance the reputation and power of the House of Savoy than to help England or Austria. Furthermore, the news that the Treaty of Worms had been signed created a furore in the minds of hostile statesmen at Paris, Madrid and Berlin. France and Spain immediately agreed to make a definite aggressive and defensive alliance, thus making a legal reality of what had for some years now been taking place in fact. But this Treaty of Fontainebleau was much more than a *de jure* recognition of a *de facto* act. It led implicitly to greater co-ordination of military effort and to a strengthening of morale in both countries. A similar reaction occurred in Berlin, where Frederick, disgusted by what he regarded as the double-dealing of Maria Teresa and Carteret (all double-dealing from which Frederick was excluded became *ipso facto* blameworthy), made up his mind once more to invade Bohemia. Thus in the long run the intricate negotiations and the long discussions which Carteret had so carefully prepared resulted in a strengthening of the enemy's position, and in erecting below the Anglo-Austrian alliance a scaffolding that was intrinsically weak.

The events which followed revealed the defects of Carteret's policy. A great deal depended on preventing the French and Spanish fleets from joining each other, since the two fleets acting together in union might prove too stiff a match for the widely-dispersed British Navy. Admiral Mathews was sent to prevent the French fleet from emerging at Toulon, but in vain. This only added force to the very present threat of invasion, coupled of course with a Jacobite rising, a threat which the appearance of Roquefeuil's Brest fleet off Dungeness made the more real. Happily, Norris and the Channel fleet barred his way, but the naval strategy of 1743-44 was hardly impressive. Nor

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was the government united enough to inspire popular morale. Carteret could never at any time have been called the inspiration of Cabinet or nation. His very aristocratic aloofness, an aloofness which disappeared in congenial company, alienated his own colleagues. There was a strain of eccentricity in him which re-appeared in his son as insanity.<sup>1</sup> His colleagues resented his failure to consult them on matters affecting foreign policy, and the carefree way in which he behaved at times of crisis. His fellow Secretary, Newcastle, smarting under the 'dryness and reserve' of his letters, wrote to Walpole that 'to appear a good German and to prefer the welfare of the Germanic body to all other considerations, this is the principle upon which my brother secretary set at Hanover, and this is now the sole object' Walpole himself, writing to Pelham from Houghton in October, 1743, commented: 'I cannot conceive what measures this bold adventurer forms to himself to secure success in the King's business. . . . To stick at nothing to gain the King, to indulge him in all his unhappy foibles, and not to see his way through a labyrinth of expectations which he must have raised, deserves no better title than infatuation' And, as he was never a man of the people, public opinion proved equally critical of his actions.

Thus lacking the support of his colleagues, Carteret was placed in a grave position, for although he had the King's confidence and friendship success was the only thing that could keep him in office. And success there was not. As France had declared war, invasion and rebellion both seemed imminent. The careful system of alliances which he had built up crumbled to pieces as Frederick once again invaded Bohemia. All the vehemence of Pitt's eloquence was focussed upon the minister's unpopular foreign policy. He attacked the way in which the Continental army was employed and the subsidies with which the Hanoverians were paid. The very principles for which the war was being

<sup>1</sup> 'His son by his first marriage had gone mad, he had just clipped off the ears of all the horses in the Duke of Bedford's stables, and had come in at five o'clock in the morning to exhibit his spoils to the Duke and Duchess.' (Walpole, *Letters*, August 16th, 1744).

### *Carteret's Dismissal*

rought were, Pitt urged, profoundly misinterpreted. Pitt's expressions were more terse and bitter than usual. If Walpole had 'betrayed the interests of his country by his pusillanimity, our present minister sacrifices it by his quixotism.' He is an 'infamous minister' who 'seems to have renounced the name of Englishman,' and whose policy has brought the King and country to the 'brink of a precipice' 'If the present system [of paying subsidies to fight Hanover's battles] is continued, our credit will be ruined, our troops will be obliged to live upon free quarters, the farmer will no longer sow nor reap, to have the produce seized by the starving soldiers, the Pretender will land and will be joined by a despairing people as a last hope against an execrable, a sole minister, who had renounced the British nation and seemed to have drunk of the potion described in poetic fictions, which made men forget their country' The Cabinet, meanwhile reinforced by Henry Pelham who had succeeded Wilmington as First Lord of the Treasury, practically demanded Carteret's dismissal. After consulting Walpole, the King agreed to this with reluctance. 'Although,' George II commented, 'I have been forced to part with those I like, I will never be induced to take those who are disagreeable to me.'

Carteret fell a victim for all these reasons. He had a full understanding of foreign policy. He saw distinctly that as France was England's chief enemy, he must try to arrange a series of alliances which would lead to the restoration of peace in Germany. This, in its turn, would enable Britain to concentrate all her forces on France and Spain. Pitt's criticism, that Carteret was subordinating British interests to those of Hanover, was based, as his own conduct at a later date showed, on a misunderstanding of the situation and may be dismissed as a debating point. On the other hand, Carteret seems to have badly misinterpreted the trend of Prussian foreign policy. Given the initial premiss that France was the real enemy, the diplomatic moves which Carteret made fall into a logical pattern. He was primarily concerned with 'power' and 'alliances' rather than with the resources of economic strength that made such power possible. He did not



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perceive the intimate connection that must exist between foreign policy and strategy. He was thus more concerned with linking together European countries in an alliance against France than with preventing France from obtaining the commercial and maritime hegemony which she wanted. This was the fundamental defect in his policy which, together with his reserve, made him a failure in the history of his times, if a brilliant one.

### *2. The Broadbottom Administration*

Carteret's fall led to the formation of a ministry representing all political parties. But the word 'party' is deceptive. There was no party in the modern sense of the word. Parliament consisted of a series of floating groups, usually attached to the person of some rich and influential aristocrat, representing both party and patronage; the Prince of Wales; his brother, the Duke of Cumberland; Russell, the rich Duke of Bedford; Lord Cobham and the Grenville-Lyttleton-Pitt faction; and finally, the Pelhams. Henry Pelham and his brother, the Duke of Newcastle, supported by Lords Hardwicke and Harrington, had formed the backbone of the Carteret administration. Their policy was not particularly consistent. 'As to Whig and Tory,' wrote Jeffrey Broadbottom, 'I know no real distinction between 'em, I look upon them as two brothers, who in truth mean the same thing tho' they pursue it differently.' They were bound together by their love of office, their desire to protect the interests of their class, and, though less obviously apparent, by their desire to serve their country to the best of their ability.

Bereft of their ablest member, Lord Carteret, the Pelhams were influenced by one factor when the ministry was reconstituted, the gloomy state of affairs at home and abroad. They wanted to strengthen the ministry by making it as representative of the different groups in Parliament as possible to reduce, if not to eliminate, the opposition which had so irritated Walpole and Carteret. Thus the Duke of Dorset, head of the Sackville clan

### *The Broadbottom Administration*

(and father of the unfortunate Lord George), replaced Harrington (who became Secretary of State for the South) as Lord President of the Council, while John Russell, the Duke of Bedford, became First Lord of the Admiralty. Minor posts were found for members of the different cliques. William Pitt alone was excluded from office, not because the Pelhams wanted to keep him out, but because George II could not forget or forgive his contemptuous references to what he had called a 'despicable electorate'

The more representative character of the ministry which naturally gave it the nickname 'Broadbottom,' necessitated a widening of policy. Hanover entered the war as a principal and by her action persuaded the United Provinces, so close to her territory, to follow her example. While neither of these events had any particular strategic significance, they did quieten the 'consciences' of Carteret's opponents. For they were now no longer able to grumble at the payment of a subsidy to a country that was not even a principal belligerent. Hanover's entry into the war also removed the opposition's objection to the use of Hanoverian troops (more especially as Pelham had removed the British subsidy for their support by subsidising Maria Teresa to the extent of a further £200,000 so that she might pay for them). The Dutch entry, it was alleged, made the war more to Britain's interest as she was directly concerned with the future of the northern seaboard. But these two changes did not really affect the character nor the conduct of the war. If Carteret's plans sometimes lacked cohesion and if his lieutenants wanted understanding, such criticism was equally true of the new ministry and its officials.

The military situation continued to deteriorate throughout 1744 and 1745. The French successes of Marshal de Saxe were most disheartening. This attractive, lame illegitimate son of Augustus of Saxony made such good use of his victory over smaller allied forces at Fontenoy that he became practical master of the Netherlands. If the long-term effect of this military *tour de force* was largely negative, the immediate results of French

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success were soon only too visible. On the one side, it led George II to conclude, in August, 1745, the Convention of Hanover with Frederick the Great. Designed to protect his beloved electorate from the desolation of war, it at once increased the distrust which Maria Teresa had long felt for her British ally. The defeat at Fontenoy still further exacerbated British opinion against the government, but before such opinion could come to a head, other events occurred much nearer home which temporarily united the nation. Fontenoy was fought on May 11th; Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, landed on the isle of Eriskay on July 23rd.

### *3. The '45 Rebellion*

The '45 rebellion constituted a real threat, but its ultimate failure was almost inevitable. No one underestimated the danger and there was a moment—Black Friday, December 6th, 1745—when the news of Charles's advance to Derby caused a panic-stricken run on the London banks. Even Pitt urged that when 'the nation is engaged in a most dangerous and expensive foreign war' and a 'rebellion breaks out at home,' 'shall we amuse ourselves with contriving methods to prevent the effects of corruption?' Everybody, he went on to say, was thinking of 'how to defend their sovereign and themselves against those who have traitorously conspired to rob him of the crown and them of their liberties, properties and religion.'

The last phrase is a telling one, and whether we dismiss it as rhetoric or not, it explains, quite apart from the rebel commanders' military incompetence, why the rebellion failed. The Hanoverian dynasty, and the vested interests to which it was attached, the merchants, the clergy, the landed gentry, had so deep a stake in the country that even those who were most critical of the royal family and were romantically attached to Jacobite legends would not lightly uproot it. There were very few Englishmen who were willing to risk the effects of conversion to a cause indissolubly

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connected with the French alliance and the Roman Catholic faith. Nor, however glamorous Charles Edward might appear to the Flora Macdonalds of this world, should it be forgotten that it was the Young Pretender's father, the less attractive 'James III,' who would have become King of England if the rebellion had succeeded. Taken all in all, the rebellion had little chance of final success, and Pitt's triple combination—liberties, properties and religion—was a singularly appropriate and accurate summing-up of the reasons why the majority of the English people supported the Hanoverians.

The military history of the rebellion is too well known to bear detailed repetition. Charles Edward landed on Eriskay on July 23rd, and less than a month later (August 19th), the Stuart standard was raised at Glenfinnan. Although the government had long known that a rising was probable, it was quite unprepared to meet the rebels' first onslaught. Before long, both Edinburgh and the Lowlands were in the Pretender's hands. A five minutes' battle sufficed to defeat the loyalist forces of the incompetent General Cope at Prestonpans. Against the advice of his wiser followers, Charles Edward now decided to invade England. It must be argued, in his favour, that he must sooner or later have entered the southern kingdom and have taken possession of London, always in English history the country's political and military hub. Moreover, he may well have felt that the psychological moment, defeats abroad and disillusion at home had arrived for invasion. On the other hand, whereas Charles Edward, as hereditary head of the nation, was strong in Scotland, his position in England, amidst a hostile population, was decidedly weaker. The clansmen, instinctively attached to the country which they knew, felt lost in the unknown contours of northern and central England. Their enthusiasm for the fight began to evaporate and, in the tradition of earlier armies bound together by local rather than national loyalties, they began to desert and return to Scotland. Thus, the further the invading army went into England the more it tended to melt away. It was at Carlisle on November 17th and by December 4th it had, *via* Preston,

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Manchester and Macclesfield, reached Derby. Two days later, in spite of the apparently propitious start, the order was given to retreat. This seems to have been the general sense of the advice given to Charles Edward by his senior officers. They asserted, rightly, that the army's strength was diminishing daily, and that it would be madness to penetrate further into England and probably be cut off from any line of retreat into Scotland. A bolder and more determined leader might have decided to have advanced as rapidly as possible on London and to have staked his all on the seizure of the capital. It is possible that he might have won through to London, for the troops guarding the capital were unimpressive. But, and this was the deciding factor, there were no real signs of any loyal attachment to the Stuarts on the part of the population through which the Jacobite army had been advancing. Less was to be expected as they neared the southern counties. Whatever victory Charles Edward might have secured must at best have been transient.

As it was, the return to Scotland was the beginning of the end. After some slight successes, the rebels were eventually put to flight by Cumberland's army at Culloden Moor in April, 1746. Cumberland lost three hundred men to the Highlanders' one thousand, and made his victory more decisive at the cost of tarnishing his reputation by a policy of severe repression. Henceforth, Jacobitism was unimportant as a political force, the Young Pretender returned to the Continent to fritter away his time and his life in dissipation and intrigue, leaving in 1788 as sole heir to the English throne, his brother, the genial scholarly prelate, Cardinal Henry 'of York,' Bishop of Frascati. When later Bonaparte's forces swept through southern Italy and uprooted his quiet life, George III compassionately conferred a pension on him.

Nevertheless, the '45 rebellion had given the English nation a profound shock, if fundamentally the danger was far less than it might appear to be. The extent of the shock can be gauged by examining the effect that the rebellion had on the City of London, and the City's citadel, the Bank of England. The war had

### *The '45 and the Bank*

naturally diminished the amount of hard cash housed in the vaults of the Bank of England. The almost record sum of £3,771,000 of 1740 had been reduced by the end of August, 1745, to £617,000. As the news grew worse, the financial situation became more difficult. At the end of September, the Bank was declining to discount any bills or promissory notes that had more than a month to run, and the run on the banks, which the news of Charles Edward's arrival at Derby caused, was met by cashing notes in sixpences instead of guineas<sup>1</sup>. This in itself would have been insufficient to sustain the Bank's credit. Therefore, some eleven hundred well-known London business men agreed to take Bank notes and, as far as possible, cash them to support the Bank's credit. In other words, the City gambled on the failure of the Jacobite rebellion—and rightly. Although the Bank's stock fell in the course of the year from 141 to 127, it very rapidly recovered its position.

Now that the crisis had passed and the French had failed to make any real use of their opportunity to cross the Channel and invade the country, the nation breathed again. But the 'Broad-bottom' still remained unsettled. It was at the time of Black Friday that Pelham decided that William Pitt's presence in the ministry would enhance its reputation. He had shown courage and patriotism, and was already more popular in the country than any other politician. But even at this juncture George II refused to accept a Secretary of State for whom he had so little liking. The Ministry, or rather the leading ministers, returned their seals of office to the King. George called on Carteret, now by succession from his mother Earl Granville, to form a ministry, but as this proved impracticable, he recalled the Pelhams.

The administration was slightly remodelled to admit William Pitt, although in character and policy it was practically unchanged. Pitt refused to take major office against the King's express wish and contented himself with the sinecure post of the Vice-Treasurership of Ireland, which he was able to change (after a

<sup>1</sup> It is also probable that this device was used to prevent the guineas being sent to the rebel forces.

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speech praising the Hanoverian soldiers) for the Paymastership of the Forces.

The '45 rebellion had administered a severe shock to the country's equilibrium—and to the government—but once the shock was over the stock markets recovered, the ministry was reformed, and the country went about its usual business. It was otherwise in Scotland, where hearts grew mournful at the fate of the Stuarts, but in both countries Culloden Moor signified the full decline of political Jacobitism.

#### *4. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle*

The next few years of war were marked, in the normal way of most wars, by a long series of ineffective campaigns. Saxe continued to win cities and in 1747 invaded Holland. The death of Charles VII, who had been nominated through Franco-Prussian pressure to the Imperial throne three years before, enabled the Hapsburg princess, Maria Teresa, to consolidate her gains and to secure the election of her husband, Francis, as Holy Roman Emperor. This was in 1745. She came to terms with the new Elector of Bavaria at Fussen and, driving Frederick and the Prussians out of Bohemia, made peace with Prussia at Dresden at the end of 1745. As Frederick still retained Silesia, he was content to let Maria Teresa enjoy Imperial power. This left the two auxiliaries, France, allied to Spain which remained in the war, and Britain, fighting each other as principals in the Low Countries and in the colonies.

Colonial warfare was important because it anticipated the greater struggle that was to break out less than a decade later. In Indian waters, Admiral La Bourdonnais with a French squadron captured the British settlement at Madras, but this enemy success was counterbalanced by British victories in America and the West Indies. Shirley, a colonial, captured Louisburg and Cape Breton Island, a base which the French had used for operations against English colonists engaged in fishing off Newfoundland.

### *The French and the West Indies*

Louisburg was important because so many West Indian ships preferred to make this port rather than Quebec their destination to avoid the long delay which sometimes followed on the freezing-over of the St. Lawrence. French trade in the West Indies had been expanding during the long interval of peace. Their share in the carriage of slaves from West Africa to the West Indian islands was one of the main reasons for the growing prosperity of the Atlantic port of Nantes. They had gained a hold on the sugar market of most of the countries of Europe; there were four hundred and fifty-six sugar refineries at work in French hands by 1742. This explains the anxiety with which British politicians and traders watched events in the West Indies during the war. 'If,' Newcastle wrote to Harrington, 'the French and the Spaniards get the better of us in the West Indies, which they do, if they hinder our expeditions, or the success of them against the Spaniards, we must for ever be at the mercy of France.' Although there had been no striking success, the war had not gone too badly in recent years in West Indian waters. Naval victories had prevented French reinforcements from sailing to the West Indies or to Canada and effectively diminished the amount of the exports and imports which usually passed between France and the islands. Between 1743 and 1748 their combined value had sunk from 24 to 7 million livres. Outwardly, these military events do not appear to have had any very definite strategic relation to each other, but they represented, as Pitt alone among the ministers really saw, that increasingly significant clash of political and economic interests in France and Great Britain which was the predominant theme of eighteenth-century history.

Thus the ensuing Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was merely an armistice, a break representing the war-weariness of the belligerents and, to some extent, their desire to prepare for the next round in the conflict. The Treaty had no finality and was far more important for what it left unsettled than for its definitive clauses. Madras was given back to England in return for Louisburg, nothing was settled about the main cause of conflict between



### *The War of the Austrian Succession*

England and France, the status of the West Indian islands, the question of frontiers and the problems arising out of the economic rivalry of the different nations in India, Europe and the Americas. It is true that France at last agreed to recognise the Hanoverians as rulers of England and averred her willingness to raze the coastal defences of Dunkirk, but these clauses were incidental, not primary.

In fact, neither British nor French statesmen were very consciously aware of what was at issue, and so made a peace in which, as Emile Bourgeois put it, 'France [and we may add England] consulted her traditions rather than her interests'. It was inevitable that the Treaty left innumerable problems unsolved and that this would almost certainly lead to future war.

The clauses which concerned England and Spain were no more conclusive or satisfactory. It had been one of England's main objects to establish naval mastery in the Mediterranean and curb Spanish ambitions in Italy. That Don Felipe, the son of the masterful Spanish Queen-mother, Elizabeth Farnese, secured Parma and Piacenza indicated the partial failure of this object. Nor was the question which had led to the outbreak of war nine years earlier mentioned in the treaty of peace. There was nothing about the right of the Spanish *guarda-costas* to search British ships in American waters, the one definitive clause, renewing the Asiento for four years, lasted less than two years. For in 1750 the South Sea Company agreed to abandon its claim to this trading monopoly in return for £100,000 in cash and the renewal of the commercial treaty of 1667. This was a victory for common sense, as trade between England and Old Spain and the Spanish colonies *via* the Spanish ports was of greater value to British merchants than the much-boasted Asiento.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. J. O. McLachlan thus sums up the importance of the treaty of 1750: 'After thirty-seven years the attempt to secure a direct and legal, though very limited, trade contact with the Spanish Indies was given up, and English statesmen contented themselves with protecting the lucrative trade to Cadiz, Bilbao and other parts of Spain. The policy which had been foreshadowed by Hawkins and finally expressed by Harley was abandoned. The Asiento had failed to justify the international friction which it had occasioned.'

### *The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle*

If, however, the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle thus opened up even indirectly a new phase in Anglo-Spanish relations, it did not delete all the grievances which were implicit in the development of two rival imperialisms. The new King, Ferdinand VI, uxorious and melancholic like his father, was a peace-lover under whose rule Spain had time to refurbish her military and economic resources before the next chapter in the Anglo-Spanish war which opened in 1762.

The Treaty left many other questions in Europe unsettled. Charles Emmanuel of Savoy complained that he had not been given the strategic point of Finale. The Empress Maria Teresa was much aggrieved at the injustice of the final settlement, she had been all along reluctant to acknowledge the Prussian conquest of Silesia and Glatz. She was also compelled to hand over certain valuable fortresses in the Austrian Netherlands to the Dutch, perhaps the only people really satisfied by the treaty, while the Austrian position in Italy had been weakened through the territory which Maria Teresa had, at Carteret's behest, bestowed on Charles Emmanuel for his support. Sooner or later the Austrians would renew the war with Frederick the Great and—in view of their continuous dissatisfaction with their present allies—probably in concert with a fresh ally if such could be found.

The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was not only inconclusive because it left all the main causes of conflict unresolved, but because war was of the texture of history in the eighteenth century. War dragged the common people in its train, more truly than any form of religion, philosophy or economic theory—the opiate of nations, dulling the senses and arousing the passions. Rival imperialisms, wealthy Britain and powerful France, now more or less acting in concert with her former rival Spain, were only given at Aix a superficial and temporary solution to their disputes. In central Europe the greed of the masterly Frederick had served to strengthen the factors that were to lead year by year to the disintegration of the Holy Roman Empire, now merely a significant symbol of a medieval world that had practically vanished

*The War of the Austrian Succession*

Within the context of the Treaty of Aix la, then, economic rivalry, political ambitions, diplomatic revolution and the Seven Years' War.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PELHAMS, 1748-1756

#### 1. *Henry Pelham and home policy*

Horace Walpole sketches the characters of Henry Pelham and his brother, Thomas, Duke of Newcastle-on-Tyne (he received the additional title of Newcastle-under-Lyme in 1756), in his famous *Memoirs*. He says of the Duke that 'he succeeded young to an estate of about thirty thousand pounds a year and to great influence and interest in several counties. This account in reality contains his whole character as a minister, for to the weight of this fortune he solely owed his every-other-way most unwarrantable elevation . . . His person was not naturally despicable; his incapacity, his mean soul, and the general low opinion of him, grew to make it appear ridiculous. A constant hurry in his walk, a restlessness of place, a borrowed importance, a real insignificance, gave him the perpetual air of a solicitor, though he was perpetually solicited; for he never conferred a favour till it was wrested from him, but often omitted doing what he most wished done. . . . He had no pride but infinite self-love; jealousy was the great source of all his faults. There was no expense to which he was not addicted but generosity. His speeches in Council and Parliament were flowing and copious of words, but empty and unmeaning. He aimed at everything, endeavoured nothing. . . . He was a Secretary of State without intelligence, a Duke without money,<sup>1</sup> a man of infinite intrigue, without secrecy or policy, a Minister despised and hated by his

<sup>1</sup> Walpole's meaning is that Newcastle had spent his large fortune in the game of politics

## *The Pelhams*

master, by all parties and ministers, without being turned out by any<sup>1</sup>

His pen-portrait of Newcastle's brother, Henry Pelham, is less caustic but hardly more sympathetic. 'The truth was that Mr Pelham, who had as much envy in his temper and still more fondness for power, was willing to take advantage of his brother's fickleness and reaped all emolument without incurring the odium of it. Sir Robert Walpole was a man of genius, but the younger man had done what his master had failed to achieve—he had exercised power without popularity. Sir Robert Walpole was bold, open, steady, never dejected. Mr Pelham was timorous, reserved, fickle, apt to despair. Presumption made Sir Robert Walpole many enemies, want of confidence in himself kept from Mr. Pelham many friends. Sir Robert Walpole loved power so much he would not endure a rival, Mr. Pelham loved it so much that he would endure anything.'

Neither of these two portraits, which represent the view of contemporary society, is really just or fair. Newcastle's whims and fancies certainly seized the imagination of his fellows as they do ours. He was nicknamed 'Hubble-bubble', his features and habits made him ludicrous. He seemed to be perpetually in a hurry. He had a horror, like the Austrian Chancellor, Kaunitz, of catching cold. Horace Walpole again conveys a fascinating picture in a letter describing the funeral of King George II. The Duke of Newcastle, he told his correspondent, George Montagu, 'fell into a fit of crying the moment he came into the chapel, and flung himself back in a stall, the Archbishop hovering over him with a smelling-bottle—but in two minutes his curiosity got the better of his hypocrisy, and he ran about the chapel with his glass to spy who was or was not there, spying with one hand,

<sup>1</sup> A similar description comes from Lord Hervey's *Memoirs*: 'the Duke of Newcastle all the while appearing under the utmost uneasiness, not knowing what to do, what to say, which way to look, and doubling the rapidity of all those graceful motions and attitudes which, even when he was not out of countenance, used to take their turn in his figure, whilst he picked his nose, his ears, and every other nasty thing that belonged to him.'

*Thomas Pelham, Duke of Newcastle*

and mopping his eyes with t'other. Then returned the fear of catching cold, and the Duke of Cumberland, who was sinking with heat, felt himself weighed down and, turning round, found it was the Duke of Newcastle standing upon his train to avoid the chill of the marble' He had an equal horror of crossing the sea and only made the journey to Hanover because he was even more afraid of losing his influence over the King. But it was Newcastle's worst misfortune that his fame was left in the hands of men who had nothing but contempt for his abilities and no sympathy with his ideas. Thomas Pelham was no fool. Perhaps his main *penchant*, as Pitt saw, related to the control of elections, the manipulation of appointments and similar matters. It was no accident that Pitt found that one of the best things about his department (which Newcastle had held so long) was the excellence of the British secret service abroad. It is no less of an accident that the Newcastle papers in the British Museum are so voluminous that no modern historian has yet attempted a full-length or definitive study.

The Duke of Newcastle was not a great man nor an original statesman, but he was probably the most politically experienced man in the country (he had been a Secretary of State since 1724). He was conscientious, honest within the rather circumscribed limits of eighteenth-century political life, and, if singularly fussy, often very efficient in matters of detail. He controlled elections with an art worthy of a better cause. And, furthermore, he spent his fortune in attaining the objects which he believed to be in the best interests of his country.

These objects may appear to be the selfish, class-conscious aims of the ruling minority to a later generation, but they were accepted by nearly every eighteenth-century politician. First and foremost, the Hanoverian succession with its various appendages, the Protestant Church, liberties and privileges of Parliament, and constitutional government, was to Newcastle as to his contemporaries the *sine qua non* of political life. But he was, perhaps, above all concerned with protecting the preserves of power, patronage and influence concentrated in the hands of the Whig nobility.

### *The Pelhams*

Nor would this have seemed strange or tragic to an eighteenth-century peer. For he and his colleagues constituted the England that mattered. 'We,' as the Duke of Portland said in 1797, 'are the natural rulers of the country.' If an observer had questioned this assumption, he would have been told that it was because 'we' formed the natural leaders of society, owned most of the land, held most of the money, controlled elections, advised the King, appointed to rectories, vicarages and sundry other offices in Church and State, officered the Army and the Navy. And it might have been added quite sincerely that 'we' have protected the privileges and rights of the common people in our efforts to retain the privileges of Parliament against the menace of autocrats and sectaries. There was something grandiose and splendid in this claim especially when it was implicitly distilled in Burke's fine prose, even if it was at the same time narrow, selfish and class-ridden. The British nobility took their office seriously and, unlike their French colleagues, generally had a fitting sense of responsibility. Newcastle was certainly no exception to this rule and, probably because he was so much the master of minor method, one of its best illustrations.

His brother, Henry Pelham, stood for the same ideas, but whereas the Duke was chiefly concerned, unhappily, with foreign affairs, Henry's main interests were nearer home. Horace Walpole's strictures on Pelham are distinctly unjust. Although he was not outstanding as a politician, he had a very good knowledge of finance; due credit has not been given to his talents. He stood for the Walpole tradition, retrenchment and economic progress, peace and prosperity. He lacked, as Horace Walpole rightly noted, Walpole's greatness, but he understood the problems confronting the government at home and showed enlightenment in his treatment of them.

The country had been involved for the past nine years in a war which, desultory as it had been, had been costly in men and materials. In 1748 the national debt stood at £79,000,000, a sum that was then felt to be unduly and even perilously high. Pelham was convinced, as Robert Walpole had been years earlier,

### *Henry Pelham*

that what the country required was a period of peace which would lead to the further expansion of the country's growing trade.

Economy and retrenchment were therefore the order of the day. The biggest items in the country's budget during the past few years had been the Army, Navy and payment of subsidies to foreign princes. Pelham, to some extent wisely, cut down the expenditure on all three, reducing the personnel of the armed forces. He would have liked to have eliminated the payment of subsidies altogether, but he was opposed by Newcastle, who held that the subsidisation of foreign princes played an essential part in the formulation of foreign policy.

This was not the full extent of the country's direct obligation to Henry Pelham. His management of the national debt was particularly skilful and enabled him to balance his budgets and to reduce taxation. Although the money market recovered fairly rapidly after the '45 rebellion, it was in many ways at the end of the war in a worse state than it had been since the century opened. The return of peace led to an increase in foreign, especially Dutch, investments, which had the happiest effect on the country's business. By 1754 it was in a better state than it had been for many years. The creation of 'Consols' (i.e. Consolidated Annuities, British government securities), which have played so important a part in the development of government finance, was one of the most important things that Pelham ever did. Until the war situation caused a cloud to hover over the money market in 1755, Consols flourished exceedingly, reaching in 1752 the highest price that they ever achieved until the eighties of the nineteenth century.

He was equally enlightened in the support that he gave to other measures, particularly those which encouraged trade and industry. He supported Chesterfield's scheme for reforming the Calendar in 1751, which met with so great a measure of obscurantist opposition. He also tried to enforce the principles of toleration by favouring, with no great success, measures intended to give greater freedom to Jews and Dissenters.



## *The Pelhams*

If Pelham had been a stronger character and if he had not died in 1754, he would have left a more emphatic mark on the history of his times. The real defect of his policy came from his failure to realise that the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle was merely an armistice. Thus while it was, from the standpoint of the country's trade and economy, justifiable to cut down the naval and military personnel, it was, as Pitt the Paymaster himself recognised, politically and diplomatically inexpedient to do so while the world situation remained so uneasy. The Pelham administration had too brief a life to give its leading minister a real opportunity to develop his ideas. Essentially fitted to be a peace minister, it was Henry Pelham's misfortune to govern the country in a period of mounting tension that preceded the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. It was equally a misfortune that Newcastle directed the country's foreign policy.

### *2. Newcastle and foreign policy*

Like his master George II, Newcastle had an essentially static view of foreign affairs, and herein may be the explanation for future disaster. He was neither specifically incompetent nor inconsistent and the historic remark that he is supposed to have made about Annapolis ('We must fortify Annapolis,' he was told 'Certainly,' was the Duke's reply. 'Where is it?') is so understandable that it should not be allowed to register against his real if rather woolly ability. But he did not see that foreign policy changed with the times and that what was in the best interests of England in 1724 need not be what was required thirty years later. This was where his own exceedingly long experience and lack of imagination led him profoundly astray. He was thinking of Europe as an unchanging pattern, and of foreign policy as a chessboard on which all the pieces—king, queen, bishop, knight and pawn—retained the same value and for ever and anon remained eternally red or white.

So he continued to follow a policy, the Austrian alliance, the

### *Newcastle and Foreign Policy*

giving of subsidies to foreign princes, the probability of a continental war with France, that grew more and more out of touch with reality. The War of the Austrian Succession had displayed the lack of any real bond of interest binding together Austria and Britain. Great Britain was a Protestant state chiefly concerned with maintaining her naval supremacy and founding an island empire made wealthy by trade and settlement. Her real rival in these matters was France, whom she sought to cripple or destroy through economic or political warfare. The Holy Roman Empire, on the other hand, was already geographically and politically an anachronism, a survival from the past, mainly concerned with preserving the power of a particular dynasty, the Hapsburgs, whose wealth and influence came from their hereditary dominions, especially in Austria. The Imperial House was still intolerantly Roman Catholic, completely uninterested (apart from the futile experiment of the Ostend Company ruined by Britain) in colonisation or navies, far more affected by the balance of power in central Europe than by what was happening in the west. Neither Newcastle nor George II realised that the Austro-British alliance was wearing thin. As a result, Newcastle spent his time and experience in subsidising the electors to the Holy Roman Empire so that Maria Teresa's son, Joseph, might succeed to the Empire without a disputed election on his father's death. This would ensure the continuance of the alliance between the British, the Hanoverians and the Austrian Hapsburgs.

Both Pitt and the Austrian Kaunitz realised that this policy was increasingly absurd. Kaunitz believed that a reconciliation between the Austrians and the French would be more advantageous to Austria than the alliance with Great Britain. Thus, the wheels were already turning towards the Diplomatic Revolution which upset all Newcastle's plans. How far did Newcastle believe that it was possible to ally with Frederick the Great? Although an alliance between Britain and Prussia had long been a possibility, the personal antipathy of the royal Houses of Hohenzollern and Hanover had so far constituted a major impediment. But

### *The Pelhams*

Newcastle himself did not believe that there was anything inconsistent in building up a whole range of alliances with mutually hostile powers—Russia, Prussia and Austria—as long as they all agreed to acknowledge their friendship with Great Britain. It was along these lines that his policy proliferated.

He knew, as all England knew by now, that France was the country's main enemy, but he was still thinking in terms which had already befogged and misled Carteret, of a war in Europe. He did not realise that the expansion of British and French territory outside Europe had changed the shape of political and military strategy. The colonial and naval scene predominated to an ever-increasing extent, and the pendulum of success would swing in England's favour as soon as she concentrated her forces on defeating France on the sea and in her colonies.

But this is, of course, to look back as an observer two centuries after the event. And yet, even so, Newcastle rarely had his thumb on the pulse of events, with the result that the situation developed beyond his powers of comprehension. He was principally concerned with negotiating a series of alliances to support the Austro-Dutch treaties of friendship, in themselves designed to check France and bolster-up the Empire. Treaties were arranged with various small German states and crowned, after Pelham's death in 1754, by alliances with Russia and Prussia. Czarina Elizabeth of Russia agreed to keep 55,000 men on the Livonian frontier and forty to fifty armed galleys on the Baltic coast if the British subsidised her to the extent of £100,000 a year in time of peace and £500,000 in war. This exceptionally expensive arrangement was supposed to check France's ally and Austria's enemy, Frederick of Prussia. The news did alarm Frederick, so much so, that he began to question the wisdom of the French alliance.<sup>1</sup> Although he was informed in flattering terms by the British minister that he 'held the sword in one

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the word 'began' is deceptive. As early as September of the previous year he had informed George II that 'my treaty of alliance with France will end in the spring which will leave me free to act in accordance with my interests and my convenience'—obviously designed to initiate some form of bargaining.

### *The Convention of Westminster*

hand and the olive branch in the other: let him say the word, and all differences we have with him would be settled,' he was genuinely and justifiably alarmed by the British *rapprochement* with Russia.

As Newcastle was very willing to add one more ally to the list, a settlement was reached in January, 1756. The Convention of Westminster, as it is usually called, consisted of four articles, the most important of which pledged England and Prussia 'to unite their forces to prevent the entry or passage' of 'whatsoever foreign Power upon whatsoever pretext desires to march its forces into Germany'. While this Convention had not the hallmark of a treaty, news of its conclusion caused a flutter in diplomatic circles at St. Petersburg and Paris. The Czarina realised what Newcastle does not even yet seem to have clearly perceived, that the Anglo-Russian alliance was incompatible with an Anglo-Prussian understanding. Once more she turned towards Kaunitz in Vienna, now precipitated to his delight into the full-fledged alliance with France which he had found so difficult to secure.

Thus Newcastle's policy wilted before the stronger forces which it sought to control, and led, by the chain of circumstance and effect, to this Diplomatic Revolution. Basil Williams adds: 'Newcastle's simple-minded idea seems to have been that by making treaties broadcast with almost every European power, quite irrespective of their relations to one another, he could isolate France and prevent a Continental war.'

But even while he was so framing British policy, events were occurring overseas which show that the situation was developing quite outside his control. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle had settled nothing about the main problems that had led to Anglo-French hostility in America and India. Remotely situated and to some degree free from direct interference, the colonial settlements soon became centres of potential trouble. This was not slow in developing. The war in the east had in effect started before the roll of alliances in Europe itself had been completed.

This was also true of the situation in America. The Treaty

### *The Pelhams*

of Aix-la-Chapelle had offered no satisfactory solution to the problem of the frontier between French and British settlers, nor to the rivalry which was accentuated by social, racial and religious differences. The French who were fewer and poorer than their colonial rivals hoped to check British expansion by building a series of forts along the river Mississippi and its tributaries. If this satisfactory strategic scheme could be carried out successfully, it would enfold the British colonies between the Alleghany mountains and the sea and so limit further British expansion. Able commanders began to erect forts, Crown Point, Niagara and Detroit along the Great Lakes and others along the Mississippi, while the British in return began to occupy the Ohio valley. It was inevitable that a clash should occur. Significantly enough, it came at a junction of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers over a fort which the British were trying to erect as an indication of their claims. The French drove the British off and replaced the British fort by one of their own, which they named Fort Duquesne. Here, as in India, the pyre of war was already burning brightly before Newcastle realised that the armistice of 1748 had come to its expected close.

### *3. Pitt and Newcastle*

The politics of this interim period were relatively peaceful and calm, especially by comparison with the troubled years at the end of Walpole's ministry. The principle of 'Broadbottom,' reflected in Pelham's attempt to combine together representatives of all the leading noble cliques in one ministry, continued. The '45 rebellion had effectually discredited the more extreme exponents of opposition by a skilful identification of disloyalty and extreme 'Toryism.' Yet neither of these two developments fully explains the absence of an organised opposition.

The death of Frederick, Prince of Wales, in 1751 removed the leading patron of parliamentary opposition and was an unestimable boon to the ministry. The Prince has suffered from

### *The Death of Frederick, Prince of Wales*

the bitter pen of his rival in *les affaires amoureuses*, Lord Hervey, and many regretted the death of a man who seemed, superficially at least, more politically responsible and more Anglophil than the father he detested. But the Prince had few abilities and would have made an indifferent King <sup>1</sup> His real importance depended on the fact that as heir to the throne he patronised the opposition to the government. His death was far more important politically than personally: contemporary opinion is reflected in an anonymous verse preserved by Horace Walpole:

Here lies Fred,  
Who was alive, and is dead;  
Had it been his father,  
I had much rather,  
Had it been his brother,  
Still better than another,  
Had it been his sister,  
No one would have missed her,  
Had it been the whole generation  
Still better for the nation,  
But since 'tis only Fred,  
Who was alive, and is dead—  
There's no more to be said.

But there was, from the point of view of the Pelhams, a good deal more to be said. Although the mantle of the patron of the opposition fell on the shoulders of the widowed Princess of Wales, the mother of the future George III, the government was temporarily freed from a portion of the cantankerous opposition subsidised by the heir to the throne.

Apart from the minor squabbles, which fill so many pages of contemporary letters and memoirs, the atmosphere of political life was curiously calm. Henry Pelham's death in 1754 altered all this as it left his brother, Newcastle, the unchallenged head of the ministry; as was not infrequent when no check was kept on the Duke he mishandled the situation. The probability of conflict abroad was so obvious that if Newcastle had been a

<sup>1</sup> For a skulful piece of special pleading in Frederick's favour see Sir George Young, *Poor Fred, the People's Prince* (1939), and also A. Edwards, *Frederick Louis, Prince of Wales* (1947).

### *The Pelhams*

different type of man he would have used the foreign situation as a patriotic rallying cry and have formed a strong administration behind him, with Pitt as one of the leading ministers. Instead he withdrew to meditate upon his loss in seclusion, for he was genuinely fond of his brother. Even Newcastle's grief was tinged with a touch of the ludicrous. 'On Friday this august remnant of the Pelhams,' writes Walpole in his inimitable way, 'went to the court for the first time (since his brother's death) At the foot of the stairs he cried and sunk down: the yeomen of the guard were forced to drag him up under the arms. When the closet-door opened, he flung himself at his length at the King's feet, sobbed and cried, "God bless your Majesty! God preserve your Majesty!" and lay there howling and embracing the King's knees, with one foot so extended, that my Lord Coventry, who was *luckily* in waiting, and begged the standers-by to retire with "For God's sake gentlemen, don't look at a great man in distress," endeavouring to shut the door, caught his Grace's foot, and made him roar out with pain.' But meditation had not taught him wisdom. He reappeared with a policy and a list of appointments which mortally offended Pitt, and displeased the nation.

Pitt was the able man of the ministry and by rights should have been raised to higher office than that which he held years earlier. He had been Paymaster of the Forces since 1746 and had carried out his duties with exemplary honesty, refusing the commission normally taken by paymasters and the rake-off that came from handling the nation's revenue. Except on one occasion when he had opposed the reduction in the personnel of the Navy, he had supported the government by his speeches and votes (though eighteenth-century parliamentary tradition did not yet insist on junior ministers following their colleagues in minor matters), but he had not scrupled to hide his dislike of Newcastle's foreign policy. He thought that it was inconsistent, meandering and opposed to the best interests of the country, he had made it clear much earlier that he could not stand the policy of ruckling to Hanover and providing the other German princes with

### *The Death of Henry Pelham*

liberal subsidies from British revenue. The country wanted a vigorous naval and colonial policy which would permit, when the time was ripe, a decisive, well-handled campaign against the French. Newcastle knew that Pitt disliked him and he feared his ability. Knowing that George II had never conquered his aversion to Pitt, he had hitherto used the royal reluctance as an excuse to keep Pitt out of the Cabinet as a leading minister.

Pelham's death had changed everything. 'He could not,' as Horace Walpole told his friend, Horace Mann, 'have died at a more critical time . . . as everything was settled by his life, so everything is thrown into confusion by his death' Pelham had been Leader of the House of Commons as well as First Lord of the Treasury, and Pitt was one of the obvious candidates for the former, if not the latter office. At this time he had the misfortune to be lying ill with gout at Bath and so left his interests in the hands of his not too competent brother-in-law, Lyttleton Henry Fox, whom many contemporaries esteemed very highly as the protégé of Cumberland, the King's favourite son, also had good claims. In the event Newcastle by-passed both men. He took the Treasury for himself and made Sir Thomas Robinson, a diplomat best known for his inordinately long despatches, Secretary of State and Leader of the House of Commons. In truth, as Walpole wrote in April, 'The Duke of Newcastle is alone and all-powerful, and, I suppose, smiles at those who thought that we must be governed by a succession of geniuses.

It may well have seemed to Newcastle that he had done rather a clever thing. He was now the absolute master of his Cabinet, since neither Robinson nor his colleague, the subservient Holderness, were likely to dispute his will. He had reckoned, however, without the eloquence of the disappointed and deceived politicians. Newcastle was safely ensconced in the Lords, but both Pitt and Fox levelled all the incisive and bitter language they could command to dethrone the unfortunate and pompous Robinson. 'They have already mumbled poor Sir Thomas Robinson cruelly.' But Robinson was only a substitute for the still complacent Newcastle. 'All of us,' Pitt said with obvious



### *The Pelhams*

reference to him, ' must assist, unless you will degenerate into a little assembly, serving no other purpose than to register the decrees of *one* too powerful a *subject* . . . otherwise naught can stop the design of making us an appendix to—I know not what—I have no name for it '

This situation could not last. Newcastle, remembering that Pitt had played a prominent part in bringing about the downfall of Walpole and Carteret, tried to rally his forces by transferring Henry Fox, who had been the Secretary at War since 1746, to the Secretaryship of State in succession to Robinson who retired, thankfully, to the dignified obscurity of the Great Wardrobe with a munificent pension. ' This,' as Walpole commented, ' is turning a cipher into figures indeed ! ' Disgusted at Newcastle's dallying and decent Pitt made a forthright attack on the government and was dismissed.

Thus, by December, 1755, Newcastle's administration was in fact faced with political and military insolvency. Confronted by the rising tide of a great war and by the opposition led by the ablest politician of his time, and with no real programme for dealing with either, the days of the Duke's ascendancy were numbered. But before this actually occurred England was involved in one of the greatest and most significant wars of the century.

## CHAPTER VIII

# WILLIAM PITT AND THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR, 1756-1763

### I. *The rise of Pitt*

There is no doubt of the power of Pitt's genius. No name in the whole of eighteenth-century history exerted so powerful a pull over contemporaries or even future generations. The very title of 'Great Commoner' by which he was known is a testimony to the universal esteem in which he was held. But the quality of his genius has been more often in debate. The historian, Lord Macaulay, in a celebrated essay found him wanting in many of the attributes which the Whig writer thought appropriate to a great statesman. There were strange inconsistencies in his public policy. His pride was exacting, his tongue severe (*cf.* his words on one occasion to his colleague, Newcastle 'fewer words, my lord, for your words have long lost all weight with me'); 'Pitt,' said Henry Fox, 'is single, imperious, proud, enthusiastic.' Nor were other critics wanting in his own age. 'Pitt's was an unfinished greatness,' wrote Horace Walpole, 'considering how much of it depended on his words, one may almost call his an artificial greatness, but his passion for fame and the grandeur of his ideas compensated for his defects. He aspired to redeem the honour of his country and to place it in a point of giving law to nations.' This strain of artificiality, combined with marked histrionic ability, undoubtedly made Pitt something of an exhibitionist. In his earlier years he had ridden about the country driving a one-horse chaise to gain popularity. Latterly his entry into the House of Lords, a grotesque emaciated figure swathed in flannel, leaning on his son William, was almost theatrical. But the defects of a public man's character must

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always be weighed besides his achievements. And these, however much Macaulay or Horace Walpole would have liked to have denied it, were very considerable. He was, as Walpole confessed, 'the most successful genius that ever presided over our councils.' He was indeed the presiding genius of the nation's fortunes at a time of dire peril. His successes brought the country through the Seven Years' War. But this is not all the country owed Pitt. He had a sense of public honesty, of patriotic service, as well as progressive and enlightened ideas on domestic and colonial problems. His greatness was, as is every man's, 'unfinished,' but that it was greatness the story of his life completely proves.

Pitt's forebears gave no sign of what was to come. They represented good southern stock that had served the country in a useful and responsible fashion as clergy and Justices in Hampshire and Dorset. His father, Robert, was unspectacular as a personality and as a politician. Pitt owed far more to his mother, the graceful and sensible Lady Harriet Villiers, and, most of all, to his grandfather, Thomas Pitt. The old gentleman, as he must have been when Pitt knew him, had a strange and irascible career. An interloper in the East India trade, he had been persuaded by the East India Company to enter their service with a view to suppressing the trade of those who, like himself, made fortunes from unlicensed commerce. He ended, with a fortune, as Governor of Madras. In his latter years he left a definite impress on all those with whom he came into contact. Bad-tempered and masterful, he was never an easy man. He had some sound ideas and many prejudices, including a great dislike for the French, some of which seem to have descended to his grandson. His letters are lucid and, like himself, commanding; the English is hammered into admirable shape. Finally he suffered, as so many of his contemporaries, from gout, a factor which also influenced Pitt's career.

William's youth does not call for much attention. He was a fourth child, born on November 15th, 1708. He was sent to Eton but he told Lord Shelburne later that 'he scarcely observed a boy who was not cowed for life at Eton.' The University—

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he entered Trinity, Oxford, in 1727—did not suit him much better although he was a candidate for a Latin prize poem Oxford—he sent his son to Cambridge—was followed by a short stay at Utrecht. What then? He was twenty-two years of age, a younger son (his father had died in 1727) with few means. His friend, George Lyttleton, introduced him to his uncle, Lord Cobham, who gave him a commission as a cornet in his regiment, later known as the First Dragoon Guards.

Neither then nor very much later is there enough information to throw any real light on the development of his thought. In many ways he was conventional enough; his love of landscape gardening and amateur architecture were well in keeping with the tastes of the period. But there were various influences at work between 1730 and 1735 which helped in the evolution of his ideas and the formation of his personality. As his military duties were very light he travelled on the Continent and acquired so fine an understanding of the French language that the French ambassador told Choiseul in 1766 that Pitt spoke the language like a native. Travel probably added to his general culture. It certainly gave him some understanding of the country, France, which was to be the object of his life-long detestation. Nor can his readings from the classical military manuals, Montecuculi, Feuquières and Vauban, have been without influence on the strategy which he wielded with so marked a success over twenty years later.

It was also in this period that he was first introduced to the niceties of political life. He soon became one of Walpole's bitterest opponents. There was nothing remarkable in this for, as an impressionable young man, he naturally absorbed the ideas of those who were constantly in his company. It needed very little to persuade him of Walpole's dictatorial ambitions, his ineptitude in foreign affairs, his subordination to the demands of Hanover. His speeches were violent and extraordinarily eloquent. It is this last point which demands close attention; it was this which led to Walpole's own attempt to 'muzzle' him. He was a forceful speaker whose vivid style attracted the

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Credit must be given to him for his championship of the just rights and liberties of the subject, but he was essentially a practical politician. He was in fact an opportunist drawing, as his biographer ably puts it, 'inspiration from the cabinet of his own sagacious mind' for 'his treatment of the conditions he found existing.' And, above everything else, he was enthusiastic to do what was in the best interests of his country. It is not easy to say what Pitt would have regarded as Britain's interests, and his outlook was probably, except on colonial problems, conventional enough.

Britain's security must be the foundation of the government's policy; hence his desire to keep a strong navy, both to safeguard the passage of the seas and to protect the country against a possible enemy. This in its own turn implied isolation from all Continental issues which did not directly concern Britain's own interests. Rationalised this came to mean more and more that France must be kept weak so that Britain's dynasty, religion, trade and colonies might be protected. But obviously the distinction between a purely defensive and an aggressive policy was very thin, and what might in its beginnings appear to be a policy of self-protection could steadily develop into a policy of expansion and conquest. The important part which Pitt expected the Navy to play in the formulation of such a policy appears in the words of one of his speeches: 'The first great and acknowledged object of national defence in this country is to maintain such a superior naval force at home, that even the united fleets of France and Spain may never be masters of the Channel. . . . The second naval object with an English minister, should be to maintain at all times a powerful western squadron . . . In the profoundest peace it should be respectable; in war it should be formidable . . . The third object indispensable, as I conceive . . . is to maintain such a force in the bay of Gibraltar as may be sufficient to cover that garrison, to watch the motions of the Spaniards, and to keep open the communication with Minorca.' There is little in this speech, delivered as late as 1770, to indicate that Pitt's views on foreign policy were particularly original.

### *Newcastle Resigns*

But his vision was nevertheless wider. He realised that the clash of interests in India and America was as important as the conflict in Europe. He had a surer understanding of his country's destiny as a great empire than most of his contemporaries and more than any of them was responsible for bringing the Seven Years' War to a successful conclusion.

His dismissal a few months before the war began in 1756 was followed by a series of disasters which revealed Newcastle's pitiful inadequacies as a war minister. The Franco-Austrian treaty of May, 1756, succeeded by the outbreak of war in Europe and Byng's failure to prevent the surrender of Minorca precipitated the minister's fall. Ever unwilling to take a back seat, Newcastle hoped to save his ministry by ordering Byng's arrest and trial, but neither this nor his overtures to Pitt could do more than check slightly the rising tide of public indignation. Bereft of their ablest supporters, neither the King nor Newcastle could make an indefinite stand. Pitt, whom long experience had made contemptuous of Newcastle's gifts in times of crisis, let loose all his venom, 'if he saw a child [Newcastle] drawing a go-cart on a precipice, with that precious freight of an Old King, and his family, sure he was bound to take the reins out of such hands. He prayed to God that his Majesty might not have Minorca, like Calais, written on his heart.' The inevitable could no longer be postponed, Newcastle resigned and Pitt—the King's mistress, Lady Yarmouth, acting as intermediary—took office as Secretary of State for the Southern Department.

Pitt was indeed the one man that the nation really trusted. Through the art of gentle self-advertisement and his known ability and public ministry he had become extremely popular. He had become the emblem of the popular will and the symbol of national resistance to France. However reluctant George II might be to accept him as his new minister, he was too clearly the 'minister given by the people to the King.'

Britannia, nodding, signifies her choice  
And hails in his, God's and the people's voice

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### *2. The origins of the War*

National historians are rarely honest in their estimates of the causes that lead to war, because they are the victims and sometimes the perpetrators of the legends that mould history to suit national prejudice. Ideas have played and, at the risk of controversy, still do play a very small part in bringing about a war. Ideas rationalise and justify the fiercer and uglier antagonisms fighting under the surface. They form, metaphorically, the splendid clothing that conceals the deformed figure beneath. The Seven Years' War was no exception. In many ways it forms the very best illustration of the most constant theme of eighteenth-century diplomatic history, the rivalry of Anglo-French imperialisms. The unlimited extent of Louis XIV's ambitions, his desire to master and to dominate the Continent of Europe, had been brought to nothing after a long series of wars in which his leading opponent had been the England of William III and Anne. England was not primarily concerned, as she was in 1940, with the question of survival, but with the enduring issue of the balance of power. If Louis was once finally victorious over England, there was no further barrier to the fulfilment of his ambitions, France would dominate Europe, and the other powers would move as satellites around the splendid court of Versailles. The War of the Spanish Succession, and the Treaty of Utrecht which had brought it to a close, thus administered a major check to the French programme.

Between 1713 and 1756 the two adversaries prepared, perhaps unconsciously, for future conflict. Neither Walpole nor Fleury really wanted war, but they knew, the one less obscurely than the other, that their policy was in the last analysis irreconcilable with enduring peace. The War of the Austrian Succession, followed by the uneasy armistice and the Diplomatic Revolution, formed the fitting prelude to the Seven Years' War since events revealed that peace can never be a permanent aspect of imperial power. Political war and economic conflict were the life-blood of eighteenth-century imperialism.

### *The Opposing Powers*

Britain, Holland and Austria formed one group of allies in the years preceding the outbreak of the Seven Years War. This grouping had grown out of their mutual hostility to Louis XIV and was thus the result of fear rather than any real harmony of interests. Holland linked to England by the accession of William III to the English throne had been England's leading rival in commerce and colonial settlement. After the alliance there continued to be an anti-British and *ipso-facto* pro-French party in the Low Countries, but fear of French domination and the very close financial ties that existed between the two countries kept them friendly. The Austrian alliance can be traced back to the antagonism of Bourbon, and even of Valois, to the Hapsburgs which had originated in the sixteenth century. Britain was drawn to Austria by Austria's hostility to France and, after 1714, by the intimate diplomatic relationship existing between the electorate of Hanover and the chancellery of Vienna.

France and Spain formed the other group of powers. Although the alliance between the two countries was given many a twist and turn in the first three decades of the century, both countries had mutual interests and links, the same royal family, the same religion, and close rather than conflicting interests in trade. Furthermore they were both interested in maintaining the balance of power in their favour against their British opponents in the Mediterranean as well as in the Caribbean.

This grouping did not, however, remain static until the outbreak of war. As the situation slowly changed the balance of power in Europe ceased to be the sole determinant of policy. It was now affected by the balance of power between the European countries on the non-European continents. If the world of the 1750s is examined, one is already astonished at the extent and resources and annual trade and income, of the territories occupied either accidentally or purposely by the European powers. The Dutch had been one of the first in the race and their vast annual profits partly accounted for their commercial and financial supremacy. From a military point of view the Dutch were a



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declining power, and their settlements had to be counted in terms of annual income rather than military might. Despite evidence to the contrary the Dutch remained supreme in financial matters until well after the middle of the century; during the Seven Years' War they benefited from their neutrality, subscribing extensively to the loans which were issued to pay for its cost.<sup>1</sup> But the actual part that the Dutch empire played in the balance of power in East and West was comparatively slight.

It was otherwise with France, Great Britain and Spain. British settlements on the coastland of India were not very numerous, but they were flourishing centres of trade and of increasing political influence in the hinterland. And in nearly every case they were faced by French settlements whose governors were often more politically, if less commercially, acute than the servants of the British East India Company. Thus Fort William was opposed to Chandernagore, Fort St. George to Pondicherry while Bombay and Mahé respectively guarded rival interests on the west coast. Spanish influence in Asia was confined to the Philippines and did not noticeably affect the conduct of power-policy.

The American scene was more important, for while Britain controlled a great deal of the North American coastline and many of the richest West Indian islands, Bermudas, Bahamas, Jamaica, Leeward Islands and Barbados, Spain possessed an immense territory on the mainland stretching from Florida in the north to Chile and the Argentine in the south. She also controlled Cuba, Hispaniola, Porto Rico and a few other islands. France ruled over Canada as well as the rich sugar islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. The only other country (apart from Denmark whose economic ventures had led to the annexation of St. Thomas) interested in the distribution of power and trade in the

<sup>1</sup> Newcastle, writing to the Dutch financier, Van Neck, in 1765: 'Nobody can be more sensible than I am, of your Constant and Steady Regard and Friendship for me—or more grateful for the great Assistance, which you so readily and so honourably gave me, in raising the Immense Sums which by your Assistance and Example, I was enabled to do, for the Service of the Publick.'

### *The Franco-Austrian Alliance*

American continent was Britain's ally, Portugal, which ruled Brazil.

Whether consciously or not, this widening of the balance of power was the foundation of the recently concluded Diplomatic Revolution which had altered the grouping of the great powers by transferring the Austrian alliance to France in exchange for the Prussian. Since 1749 Kaunitz had realised that Britain's interests were less and less involved in the fate of the central European power of the Hapsburg empire whereas France, equally interested as she might well be in colonial issues, was irretrievably bound to the Continent of Europe and a far more natural ally of Austria. But he had for long been a voice crying in the wilderness—if a wilderness of *Louis quinze* chairs and elegant festivities. After three years as Austrian ambassador to France he had returned, in 1753, to become Chancellor of the Empire, but the seed which he had sown did not germinate until the breakdown of the Franco-Prussian alliance. This treaty of alliance was due to end in May, 1756, but the French seemed reluctant to renew their agreement with the Prussian King Frederick, alarmed by the negotiations between Austria and Russia as well as by Newcastle's understanding with the latter power, decided on a reversal of his plans and signed the Treaty of Westminster with England on January 16th, 1756.

The Treaty of Westminster was a boon to Kaunitz. His plan for an alliance between Austria and France had now some chance of acceptance. Negotiations were opened in September, 1755, but they progressed slowly until the news of the Treaty arrived. The two powers signed a preliminary agreement at Versailles on May 1st, 1756, in the form of a defensive alliance. In the light of future events it is doubtful whether France gained much from her new friend, but Austria, 'in changing the most important of the Continental Powers from an enemy into a friend, in freeing herself from anxiety as to her distant possessions in the Netherlands, and in recovering her freedom of action against the King of Prussia,' had certainly acted in accordance with her best interests. Although many thought that this treaty would

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stabilise the situation, it actually heralded the outbreak of a great world war in which France and Great Britain were the leading participants.

The interests dividing the two countries, and therefore more directly the causes of war, were partly political. Public opinion was definitely hostile towards France as a result of the long story of conflict which could be traced back to the medieval period when England's Kings had claimed and ruled part of the land which the French monarchy naturally wanted to control. Cultural and other contacts made the upper classes of English society remarkably tolerant, but a feeling of enmity, especially among the middle and lower classes, persisted, based on ingrained differences in government, religion and character. Each believed that if the opportunity occurred, it would soon fall a victim to the other's political ambitions. Politically then the question of power and territory was really subordinate to patriotic considerations, themselves the outgrowth of past history, strongly held ideas and profound national differences.

Yet predominantly the real issue was economic. Beneath the emphatic complaints of contemporaries in both countries about enslavement, tyranny, oppression, religion and possible conquest, there was all along the underlying anxiety that what was really at issue was the country's prosperity, the balance of trade. Questions of territory and influence, superficially unconnected with economic rivalry, must usually be interpreted in this sense.

The question of the trade with Spain illustrates this point. French merchants had hoped that their trade with Old Spain and the colonies would increase greatly as a result of the enthronement of a Bourbon in Spain. In the past century Spain had become a profitable field for exploitation by foreign capital, for much of her carrying trade was in foreign hands. Yet the French found that they were repeatedly outclassed by their British rivals in the race for the control of the valuable Spanish trade with Europe and America. For many years the British had had the dubiously valuable privilege of the *Asiento*, and after

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this had come to an end in 1750 they had acquired profitable commercial rights. The competition between French and British merchants for the exploitation of Spanish trade was one of the factors generating the tension that led to the outbreak of war. The Levant was another field of competition in which, on the whole, the French maintained their traditional supremacy.

In India economics and politics were closely combined in the imperialistic policy put forward by the great French pro-consul, Joseph Dupleix. When the Subadar of the Deccan—a great state populated by thirty-five million people—died, Dupleix intervened in the disputed succession to impose his own pro-French candidate as the native ruler. His efforts were successful here as in the Carnatic. Both these steps threatened the British positions in India, for they made the French effective rulers of a vast territory in southern India and blocked the possible future expansion of Madras. This relatively small British settlement constituted the main obstacle to final success, but it and the fortress of Trichinopoly, where the unsuccessful British candidate to the throne of the Carnatic had taken refuge, were both virtually surrounded.

The British East India Company had been so far principally concerned with the expansion of its trade and profits. It was not consciously imperialistic nor was its Board of Directors anxious to secure territory. All it asked was the right to live and, as far as possible, to exploit the trade of the district in which it had established its factories. But it was obvious that it faced virtual extinction if Dupleix's plan succeeded. And, by one of those freaks of fortune which prove that personality plays a far from subsidiary part in the development of history, the Company had at one of its desks, Robert Clive, a soldier of ability, courage and foresight who had returned to civilian life at the end of the War of the Austrian Succession. He advised the Governor of Madras to stage a diversionary raid on Arcot, the capital of the Carnatic, now temporarily weak because of the troops which Chanda Sahib had taken to besiege his rival in Trichinopoly. Helped by the simultaneous conjunction of the attack with a

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severe thunderstorm, Clive's plans matured brilliantly. His defence of Arcot made military history and helped to revive British prestige in India. The play had begun and with the first scenes enacted in time of peace, it could only be a matter of a few years before the next act took place to the sound of war. The rivalry of the two trading companies in south India and in Bengal for the spoils of Asia formed a fitting prelude to the Seven Years' War.

The situation in North America was much more intricate. The French province of Canada was in many ways an outpost of metropolitan France transferred to America. Here were to be found the same centralised administration, the same semi-feudal society, the same dominant Roman Catholic Church, as in France. The wide area supported a scattered population, drawing a rather precarious income from fur-trapping and agriculture. Although less wealthy than the British colonies, Canada had the advantage of forming a single political and military unit under the direct control of a royal governor appointed from Versailles.

The British colonies were infinitely various in character, independent by nature and politically incohesive. But they were growing fast (they had a population of over a million by 1759) while their exports and imports dwarfed those of Canada into complete insignificance. The British settlers, land and adventure hungry, were forever stretching and pushing out towards the west, the north and the south. This brought them into relations with the Red Indian tribes, some of whom used white help to settle tribal disputes. The French accused the British, and vice versa, of encouraging the natives to collect the scalps of foreign outposts, probably with some justification. Nor had the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle settled the actual limits of the frontier in North America; there was a perpetual no man's land stretching for thousands of miles beyond the Alleghanies and along the river Ohio and down the Mississippi.

In an effort to check this movement the Canadian government decided to build a series of forts which would enclose the British frontier by linking up the frontier of French Canada with that of

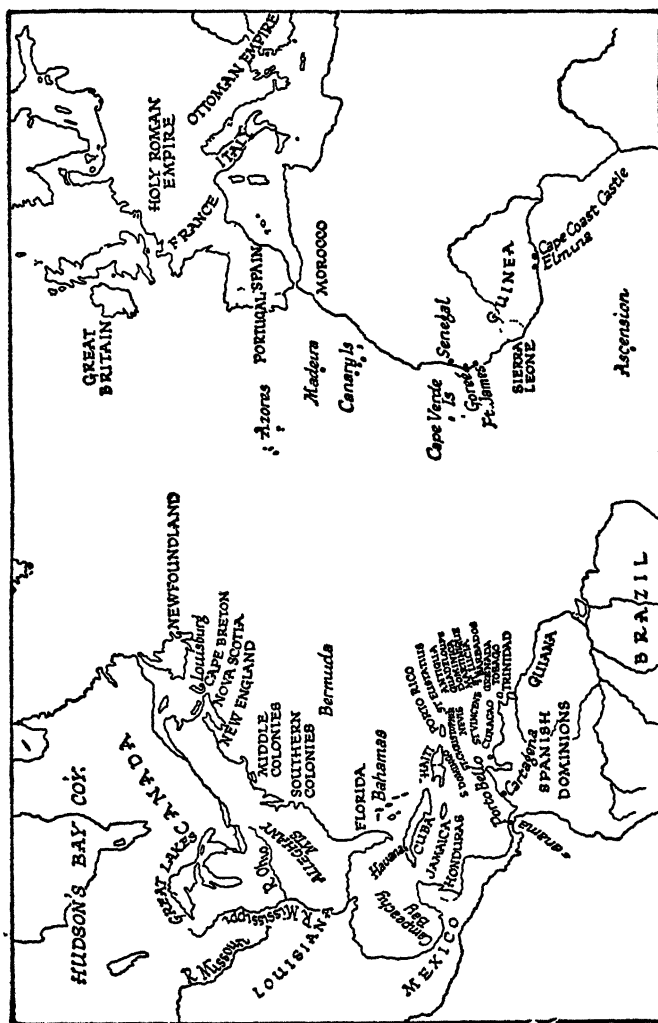


Fig. 3. European Settlements in America and Africa.

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Louisiana, the French colony in the south. As in India, so in America the colonists could not permit events to take their course without intervening. The Virginians established an Ohio Company to colonise the Ohio valley with English settlers, while the French sent an armed boundary commission to claim the Alleghanies as the frontier between the two nations. To counteract this move a small British expedition began to build a fort at the confluence of the rivers Alleghany and Monongahela, only however to be driven away by the French who built a fort of their own, named Fort Duquesne in honour of the Canadian Governor-General. In May, 1754, a small British force under Colonel George Washington was compelled to surrender to a bigger French force after an initial victory over their opponents, but the British had no intention of submitting to French dictation. The unimaginative Braddock, who had sailed with reinforcements for America early in 1755, then marched on the fort, but his force was ambushed and slaughtered by a mixed force of French and Red Indians on the banks of the Monongahela in July. This was the real beginning of hostilities, anticipating by some months the outbreak of war in Europe where the diplomats were still conducting their tortuous negotiations.

The West Indies formed the last scene of economic and political rivalry. Three powers, Britain, France and Spain, were intimately concerned with economic and strategic considerations in the West Indies, quite apart from the unlicensed traders of every nationality who appealed to their home governments when it suited their interests. The British West Indian colonies were suffering from the competition of the French islands, Dominica, Martinique and Guadeloupe in particular, and were continuously angry with the North American colonists for trading with the French and the Spaniards rather than with themselves.

These were the leading features to the background of the war which made it pre-eminently a struggle for empire. No one could predict the future with certainty. British soldiers and sailors had revealed no particular merit or leadership in the War of the Austrian Succession, whereas the French still lived on the

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capital of the past which Louis XIV had stored up through numerous campaigns. The prestige of the British Navy still remained considerable, but its power was diminished through its vast responsibilities: the Channel, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea and the Indian Ocean. The British merchant marine was strong, but there had also been a great increase in the number of French trading ships during recent years. The relative strength of the Russian, Austrian and Prussian armies had also to be taken into account. Roughly, the two sides were fairly equally matched, but the resources of Britain, her insular position, her naval supremacy and the matchless command of William Pitt, finally swayed the struggle in her favour.

### *3. The ministry of the elder Pitt, 1756-1761*

The beginnings of the most distinguished ministry in the annals of eighteenth-century history were not propitious. Recent military disasters, the loss of Forts Oswego and Ontario and Byng's failure at Minorca, had unnerved the country, for such events appeared as harbingers of future evils. Nor was the political situation more favourable, since the new minister lacked the support of King and Commons.

Yet brief and unsatisfactory as the history of the first ministry may appear to be, there are certain points about it which demand attention. It marked, for instance, the beginnings of an improvement in the relations between George II and Pitt. The King had never forgiven his attacks on the Hanoverian levies and only a few weeks earlier he had told Newcastle that 'Mr. Pitt won't do my German business'. But he had begun to realise that Pitt had greater stability of character than Henry Fox and a more powerful following in the country. Pitt, too, had begun to tone down his criticisms of royal policy. He had never opposed the monarchy nor the person of the King; it was the royal disregard of England's real interests which had aroused his wrathful



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eloquence. But he had abandoned his attack on Hanover, realising that the electorate's strategic position as well as her forces might prove useful in the coming war. The relations were, however, still strained when Pitt took office as Secretary of State on December 4th, 1756.

The next few months were a time of trial which seemed to justify the pessimistic prophecies of Pitt's critics. It was clear that however much Pitt was supported by the people, his ministry must fail unless it had the confidence of the King and the Commons. The King's support was perfunctory. In the Houses of Parliament Newcastle's opposition constituted a major impediment to success. 'His Grace [after his resignation] retired to Claremont, where, for about a fortnight, he played at being a country gentleman. Guns and green frocks were bought, and at past sixty, he affected to turn sportsman, but getting wet in his feet, he hurried back to London in a fright, and his country was once more blessed with his assistance.' Newcastle's great organising ability was thus brought into play to make Pitt's task impossible. Temporarily at least Pitt's popularity in the country was reduced by the vigour with which he urged the King and Parliament to show mercy towards the unfortunate Byng.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the minister himself was afflicted by so violent an attack of gout that he was unable to take his place in the House until February 17th, 1757. Everything conspired to bring his ministry to an end, for the King only awaited an opportunity to dismiss him. The unpopular Duke of Cumberland, the King's second son, who had been offered the command of the 'Army of the Rhine,' made it a condition of his appointment that Pitt should go. Thus, after various manoeuvrings, George dismissed the unwelcome minister on April 6th. The prologue was complete and the first act was due to begin.

The first act was thoroughly unsatisfactory; it had neither

<sup>1</sup> It was Pitt's plea to this effect at the Cabinet Council of February 26th which produced George's comment 'Sir, you have taught me to look for the sense of my subjects in another place than in the House of Commons.'

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shape, plan nor object. For the political interregnum which followed Pitt's dismissal revealed the strength of his position in the country as nothing else could have done. Popular opinion, encouraged by the knowledge that the hated Cumberland was partly responsible for Pitt's fall, swept to his support. London, Bath, Worcester and fifteen other cities presented him with their freedom; Exeter 'with singular affectation sent boxes of hearts of oak.' A paper affixed to the door of St James's Palace represented popular feeling: 'A Secretary of State wanted; much honesty not necessary, no principle will be treated with' At the start of a great inter-continental war, George II was thus placed in an extraordinarily difficult position. Obstinate like all his family, he would not admit his mistake and tried every expedient before he recalled Pitt.

Meanwhile, Pitt had realised that Newcastle was essential to ministerial stability. Although he had told Lady Yarmouth less than a year previously that he would never accept office with Newcastle, he saw that the Duke's supporters in the Commons could give a minister the security necessary for the conduct of war. Newcastle, for his part, feared that power might fall into the hands of Cumberland and his protégé, Henry Fox, and much as he was affronted by Pitt's impatience and arrogance, he was eventually persuaded to join with him. The negotiations, conducted by Chesterfield, were brought to a successful conclusion and Pitt took office again at the end of June 1757.

Pitt has been criticised for allying with Newcastle, a man whose policy he had so emphatically condemned and whose political influence he detested. Newcastle wanted power and was willing to spend money to attain his object, less because of principle and patriotism than because he loved to control the trivialities of administration. Pitt's own reaction is best put in his own words: 'But what is to be done? Do not imagine that I can be induced to unite with him unless sure of power—I mean power over public measures. The disposition of offices (except the few efficient ones of administration), the creating of Deans, Bishops and every placeman besides, is quite out of my plan, and I would willingly

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relinquish them to the Duke of Newcastle.' These conditions formed the foundation of the ministry, it was arranged that although Newcastle should hold the key-post of First Lord of the Treasury, he should confine his activities to the control of the Commons and the dispensation of patronage. Pitt cannot be blamed for accepting these conditions. He knew that if he could only endow Newcastle with the trappings of power, he, Pitt, would wield the reality. But the Duke's support was an indispensable element for success in view of his great influence in the Commons.

Pitt was, of course, the corner-stone of the administration. He had said, probably to Devonshire, in October 1756: 'my lord, I know that I can save this country, and that no one else can,' and he meant it. If the remainder of the Cabinet were not nonentities, they at least fade into insignificance by comparison. It will be noted that Pitt merely retained his old office of Secretary of State for the South while the more important Secretaryship of the North went to the man who had held the Southern Department since 1751, Robert D'Arcy, Earl of Holderness. Holderness was not a loyal colleague, but he did not interfere with Pitt's plans nor dispute his judgment in his conduct of foreign affairs. Pitt was, in fact, the master of his Cabinet. He could sway opposition with a look, and however much his colleagues might grumble behind his back, the threat of resignation was quite sufficient in the early stages of the ministry to break the determination of the most recalcitrant.

He had a greater following in the country than in the Commons. He had taken office when the fortunes of war were at their lowest ebb and he gradually raised them to such a height that even the critical Horace Walpole was forced to confess his greatness. To a far greater degree than Marlborough or the younger Pitt and to no less a degree than Winston Churchill, he personified his country in wartime. This, rather than its supposed constitutional implications, explains Johnson's epigram of 1772: 'Walpole was a minister given by the King to the people; Pitt was a minister given by the people to the King.' Nor was his popularity entirely the product of military success. When his military strategy seemed

### *The Support of Prussia*

disastrous, he restored public confidence at home and in the colonies by giving a plain, unvarnished account of what had happened.

'I know that I can save this country, and that no one else can.' The statement appears conceited. Self-confidence without ability has led many politicians to high office, but Pitt's self-confidence was an aspect of his genius. He had a far clearer grasp and understanding of the whole scope of the war than any of his contemporaries. Extremely observant, he always astonished his subordinates by his command over detail. Despite his ever-recurrent gout—'Sir,' he said with reference to his crutches, 'I walk on impossibilities,'—he overwhelmed the executive and the legislature with his vision, the swiftness of his decisions, his choice of skilful officers and his terrific energy. 'No man,' said Barré after his death, 'ever entered the Earl's Closet who did not feel himself, if possible, a braver man at his return than when he went in.' He has been accused of inconsistency because he did not change the policy towards Hanover, which he had so fiercely criticised in the past, but the charge is unjust. Apart from the fact that he was bound by the recently-concluded Convention of Westminster, he saw clearly that the Prussian King could not withstand the united forces of Austria, France and Russia, without subsidies of men and money. And so he despatched the Hanoverians and Hessians, whom Newcastle had brought over to England, back to Germany to form an army which would protect Frederick's flank along the river Weser. Herealised fully that the Prussian army could pin down the French army and so prevent reinforcements reaching the French forces in Canada and India. His much-criticised raids on the French coast, breaking 'windows with guineas' as Walpole called them, were also intended to divert the French armies from Hanover and Prussia as well as from America and Asia.

His European policy formed, then, an integral part of the whole. While the French forces were held down in Europe, he could secure the British command of the seas, a factor which was vital to victory in the West Indies and Indian waters. As early as 1751, he had opposed the reduction of the naval personnel and as soon

### *William Pitt and the Seven Years' War*

as he took office again he made certain, with the full co-operation of the First Lord, the famous Lord Anson, that the Navy was kept up to its full strength. The Navy kept open Britain's lengthy communications and foiled, as the victories of Lagos and Quiberon Bay (1759) revealed, French plans for the invasion of England; it also made it possible for British forces to take the initiative in America and India. Pitt's strategy was focused around his naval policy which was an essential reason for his final success.

So comprehensive a grasp of the whole situation not only demanded foresight, boldness and realism, which Pitt habitually displayed, but required able lieutenants to bring the plans to a successful conclusion. Pitt inherited men whose talents were not equal to the tasks that faced them. He took advantage of military failure to replace them by young and skilful men whom he could trust. The veteran Ligonier and Ferdinand of Brunswick replaced Cumberland; Amherst, Boscawen and Wolfe followed Loudoun<sup>1</sup> and Holburne in Canada, while in Clive of India Pitt had a man whom he greatly admired.

This analysis, to which must be added his full understanding of the final principles involved in the war, explains Pitt's claim to greatness and why he was so popular.

The events of 1757 hardly seemed to foreshadow success. While Frederick's armies were defeated at Kolin in Bohemia, the officers of the young Nawab of Bengal, Surajah-Dowlah, seized the opportunity to crowd one hundred and forty-six Europeans in a badly-ventilated room eighteen feet wide by fourteen feet long on an Indian night in June, with results too unpleasant to chronicle. Nor did Pitt's ascendancy halt the tide of defeat. Cumberland, who had lined up the Army of Observation, 40,000 strong, to protect Hanover, retreated across the Elbe after a defeat by the French under d'Estrees at Hastenbeck in July. He withdrew to the duchy of Bremen, whose integrity the Danes

<sup>1</sup> Loudoun was best known for his very lengthy despatches. Benjamin Franklin called him a 'St George on the signposts, always on horseback but never advancing.' He spent his time 'making sham forts and planting cabbages.'

### *The Disasters of 1757*

had promised to protect forty-two years earlier. Unwilling to be involved in a general war, the Danish King proposed mediation. On September 8th, Cumberland signed the Convention of Klosterseven which led to the withdrawal of half of his forces beyond the Elbe and the disbandment and internment of the remainder. The results of the Convention differed materially from those which the mediator had envisaged. Richelieu, the French commander, marched his army away before the Convention was enforced. A howl of execration went up in England, led by the King himself. For although George II had empowered his son to negotiate, he rather unfairly repudiated his son's signature and replaced him as Commander-in-Chief by a more skilful general as soon as he heard of the Convention.<sup>1</sup>

But neither the defeat at Kolm nor the horrid scene at Calcutta nor the unpopular Convention, which naturally exposed the western flank of Frederick's armies to the French, ended 1757's tale of woe. Pitt's first raid on the French coast was a dismal failure, partly because the King had insisted on giving the command of the expedition to the elderly John Mordaunt rather than to Pitt's choice, the young Henry Conway.

Events in America lined up with events in Europe to irritate Pitt and his colleagues. Pitt told Sackville that the news 'have sunk me into little less than despair of the country . . . the state of the nation is indeed a perilous one and fitter for meditation than discourse . . . and demands all the ability that the age can furnish' The English Commander-in-Chief, Loudoun, abandoned his plan for taking Louisburg, while Vice-Admiral Holburne returned to England after a hurricane had destroyed one ship and crippled nine others. Meanwhile, after transporting men and munitions over difficult forest tracks, Montcalm, the French general, captured Fort William Henry which protected the southern end of Lake George in spite of the fact that there was a British garrison only six hours' distance away

<sup>1</sup> Cumberland's military abilities were not ranked high. After the battle of Laffett 'an English captive, telling a French officer that they had been very near to taking the Duke prisoner replied "We took care of that, he does us more service at the head of your army"'

### *William Pitt and the Seven Years' War*

Although the British were depressed by the disasters of 1757, Pitt was doing much more than merely mark-time. He saw how important it was to keep a Prussian army in the field if the British were to have a relatively free hand in America and India; with that in his mind he concluded a treaty with Frederick (who had been making frantic appeals for men and money), by which the Prussian King promised not to make a one-sided peace with the common foe if Britain paid him an annual subsidy of £670,000. Pitt also discovered that an incompetent general could ruin a good plan, and so gradually placed his own nominees in positions of authority on land and sea.

British fortunes improved during 1758. With that singular talent which he possessed for redeeming the situation when things seemed at their darkest, Frederick defeated the French armies under Soubise at Rossbach in November, 1757, and followed it up by defeating the Austrians at Leuthen in Silesia a month later. Neither of these victories was completely decisive; Frederick continued to be hard-pressed by the Russians and Austrians in the early months of 1758, and later in the year only just managed to avert the occupation of Berlin by fighting a bloody battle with the Russians at Zorndorf. But the general position in Germany was greatly helped by the reconstruction of the Army of Observation under the command of one of Frederick's own generals, Ferdinand of Brunswick. He pushed Richelieu and the French back to the river Weser, then over the Rhine, and in the early summer of 1758 imposed two defeats on them at Rheinberg and Crefeld. The Continental campaign had thus in part fulfilled its object, for, difficult as the situation might at times appear to be, Frederick had lost no ground of great strategic importance, the French armies had been defeated and, what was more important, the European campaigns had contributed to British victories elsewhere.

The raids on the French coast formed an integral part of Pitt's planning. Although these raids were unpopular, even with their commanders, Ferdinand of Brunswick wanted Pitt to continue them. Apart from their moral and military effect, the raids

### *Raids on the French Coast*

destroyed much war material, while the harbours against which they were directed were known to be the headquarters of French privateers. Frederick himself would have preferred to have a British force on the Continent and a British fleet in the Baltic but, failing this, he pressed Pitt to send raids to France. The French raids were actually far less of a success than Holmes' attack on the port of Emden. One expedition in early June pillaged the village of Cancale, burned stores and shipping at St. Malo, but failed to take Cherbourg and so returned to the Isle of Wight. A second expedition arrived off Cherbourg, which the French had begun to refortify, took the town, demolished the harbour basin and forts, capturing stores and ammunition before it returned to Portland. A third raid, whose objective was St. Malo, was repulsed on September 11th. Two further expeditions, which also formed part of Pitt's general plan, were despatched to French stations in West Africa and were, by contrast with the French raids, as ably executed as they had been brilliantly planned. These blows damaged the French slave trade and so increased the profits of British slave traders. All these expeditions were in the nature of what has later come to be called a 'war of nerves,' a constant reminder to the French generals of the threat to the integrity of France.

But both the war in Germany and the raids on France were facets of the plan rather than the plan itself. Pitt foresaw that repercussions of the greatest importance would follow the conquest of French Canada and the rich sugar plantations of the West Indies. The American campaign was therefore the centre-piece of his strategy. Although Pitt knew nothing personally of the geography of America, he was primarily responsible for the Canadian plan, the outlines of which he sent in eight despatches to the generals in America. Except for Abercromby, 'Mrs. Nabbycromby,' the armed forces were served by younger men of skill and ability: Amherst, Boscawen, Wolfe and the young Lord Howe who was soon to be killed by a stray French bullet. Pitt's plan was of luminous clarity. The Navy was first to prevent any reinforcements reaching the colonies and to keep the channel



### *William Pitt and the Seven Years' War*

open for men and goods; it was to co-operate with the Army to seize Louisburg. While the French were preoccupied with the siege, Abercromby would proceed to capture Quebec. Finally, further forces under Forbes would attack French forts to sever the French lines of communication. Although the plan was only partially successful, it served as an essential preliminary to the great year of victories.

All went well at first. Louisburg, manned by no more than 5,000 troops, not all of whom were members of the Regular Army and many of whom were weakened by scurvy and want of fresh meat, fell to the attacking forces on July 27th. The city's fall caused great rejoicing in England, and Lady Hester (Pitt's wife) wrote to the man principally responsible, rejoicing, as she put it, for an event 'so happy and glorious for my loved England, happy and glorious for my most loved and admired Husband'. Abercromby's expedition was less successful. His army outnumbered Montcalm's French troops by three to one, but he lacked the initiative and decision which were to serve Wolfe so well next year. Lack of foresight—he ordered the action to begin before the artillery had arrived—led to severe casualties and an initial failure before the French fort at Ticonderoga. Next day he ordered the retreat to begin. No blame can be attached to his soldiers, who fought heroically, but Pitt's plan obviously required a commanding officer of more positive ability.

The third part of the plan succeeded, chiefly because Bradstreet had captured stores at Fort Frontenac intended for Fort Duquesne. Forbes planned to take the French naval base on Lake Ontario which could have been used to reinforce Fort Duquesne, his ultimate objective. In many ways an epic of endurance, the expedition resulted in the capture of the fort, re-named Fort Pitt and eventually metamorphosed into Pittsburgh. Forbes, who was so ill that he had to be carried in a litter during most of the campaign, wrote: 'I have used the freedom of giving your name to Fort Duquesne, as I hope it was in some measure the being actuated by your spirits that now makes us masters of the place.'

### *The Capture of Quebec*

The events of 1758 formed a fitting prelude to the great year, 1759. The Canadian campaign was brought to a successful conclusion. The planning was much the same as that of the previous year, but it was simpler and more daring in detail and its execution was entrusted to three brilliant officers: Major-General James Wolfe, Admiral Charles Saunders and Captain Amherst. Saunders sailed up the river St Lawrence to blockade Quebec from the sea, while Wolfe attacked it from the land. Quebec was strategically well situated for its defenders, who were led by gallant and able officers. Montcalm intended to remain on the defensive, hoping that the advance of autumn and winter would lead to the withdrawal of the British forces (as had actually happened in 1711, during the War of the Spanish Succession). The story of Quebec's capture is too well known to bear repetition. From the point of view of the military historian, it was an exceptionally successful combination of military and naval forces. For the moralist, it showed in Wolfe a man of great courage, tenacity and powers of leadership. Politically, it furthered Pitt's reputation and was the most important initial step in the annexation of all Canada.

Quebec surrendered on September 17th, 1759, well over a year after Abercromby had left Ticonderoga (incidentally occupied by Amherst at the end of July). Events in other theatres of war were all welcome signs of happier fortune. The first event of *annus mirabilis* was paradoxically a complete failure, the attempt on the French island of Martinique, but it led to the capture of Guadeloupe, the richest of all French islands, which its conquerors treated generously.

Interest soon shifted, however, from the West Indies to the Mediterranean. The Abbé Bernis, curious cleric and better courtier (Horace Walpole added: 'He had an easy talent for trifling poetry, it was his whole merit and his whole fortune'), had been succeeded by Choiseul, a foeman far more worthy of Pitt's steel. Experienced in diplomacy and war, the new minister had intelligence, courage and ability. But he succeeded too late to high office to do much more than mobilise the resources of

### *William Pitt and the Seven Years' War*

France more effectively and so prolong the war. He was, however, confident of his country's chances: 'I have so great an idea of the power of this country, that under the direction of a strong man, who has courage and patience, I believe she can always recover from her losses. The King, therefore, is determined to fight against England up to his last crown and his last man.' He planned to form a grand alliance of European powers against Britain, and began by making approaches to Russia, Sweden and Denmark. Above all, he hoped to bring Spain, already greatly alarmed by the extent of Britain's victories in the West Indies, into the war. 'Only,' he wrote to the French ambassador at Madrid towards the end of 1758, 'the concerted navies of the two Crowns can impose respect on our common enemies'

The German situation in 1759 seemed to favour the renaissance of French power. Frederick's fortunes, on the down grade since the battle of Zorndorf, declined still further and reached their lowest ebb at the defeat of Kunersdorf in August, 1759. Momentarily, Ferdinand's chances did not appear much brighter, for early in 1759 French troops had pushed his men out of Hesse and right up to the borders of Hanover itself. The situation was entirely changed by his victory at Minden which raised Ferdinand's reputation as a general to a very high level, and to some extent modified the evil effects of Kunersdorf, fought a few days later. Minden might have been still more decisive if Lord George Sackville, who was in command of the English cavalry, had advanced when he was ordered to do so. Despite his friendship with Pitt, he was recalled, tried by court-martial and declared 'unfit to serve his Majesty in any military capacity whatever,' a decision not wholly adhered to in later years. But the victory of Minden remained, the Quebec of the old world in its moral effects.

It was the command of the seas which foiled Choiseul's plan for defeating England in 1759. Once the decision to invade England was made, flat bottomed barges were built and troops were concentrated at Le Havre, Brest, Rochefort and Dunkirk, preparatory to their embarkation in transports. A secondary and

### *Quiberon Bay*

diversionary expedition was intended for Scotland. The all-important task of protecting the transports from the guns of the British Navy was to be undertaken by the squadrons now being fitted out at Toulon and Brest. News of these preparations reached Pitt through the British intelligence service, but he would make no fundamental change in his plans. He called up the local militia and stationed it along the south and east coasts and in the Isle of Wight and, as usual, placed his main reliance on the British Navy. Boscawen was despatched to Toulon to prevent the French ships stationed there from joining the fleet at Brest, while Hawke, with his headquarters in Torbay, was to watch the Brest fleet. Other ships were stationed at the mouth of the river Thames. But Pitt did not content himself with defensive tactics; Rodney bombarded Le Havre to destroy some of the flat-bottomed boats. Boscawen, in pursuit of the Toulon fleet which had somehow escaped his vigilance, drove La Clue into the neutral Portuguese waters of Lagos Bay where he suffered a crushing defeat. The destruction of the Toulon fleet obliged Choiseul to change his plans, Scotland was now made the main object of the Brest fleet, but it was intended to make a diversionary raid on Ireland. A fierce gale, which kept Hawke within the sheltered waters of Torbay, had enabled a French squadron under Bomparr, coming from the West Indies, to contact Conflans' fleet at Brest. Conflans decided that this was the right moment to embark the 18,000 troops concentrated at Morbihan and set sail for Scotland. Even when he was confronted by Hawke's fleet, he still hoped that the wind and his strategy would combine to drive the latter on to the dangerous shoals of Quiberon Bay. Hawke, by a brilliant and, in view of the weather, rash manoeuvre, grappled with and practically destroyed the French fleet, certainly wrecked the French chances of successfully invading Britain. Choiseul still hoped for something from the Irish expedition but, under a month after Hawke had received the thanks of the grateful Commons and a pension of £2,000 a year, this too suffered complete destruction after pillaging the town of Carrickfergus in February, 1760. Thus the trump card in

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Choiseul's hand was snatched and torn to shreds. No wonder that Garrick sang in his 'Heart of Oak'.<sup>1</sup>

Come, cheer up my lads! 'tis to glory we steer,  
To add something more to this wonderful year

News of Clive's activities in India was equally satisfactory 'Mr. Pitt,' said Clive after an interview with him, 'seems thoroughly convinced of the infinite consequences of the East India Company to the nation; he made no scruple to me of giving it the preference to our concerns in America' In 1757 he had recaptured Calcutta, driven the French from Chandernagore and defeated Surajah-Dowlah at Plassey, a battle which gave the Company control over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Pitt truly remarked of Clive that he was a 'man not born for a desk—that heaven-born general! He, it is true, had never learned the arts of war or that skill in doing nothing, which only forty years of service can bring! Yet was he not afraid to attack a numerous army with a handful of men with a magnanimity, a resolution, a determination and an execution that would charm a King of Prussia and with a presence of mind that astonished the Indies.' By 1760 Clive had made the British masters of the situation in North-East India, while the reinforcements which Pitt had sent under Eyre Coote began to clear the French out of the Carnatic.

The events of 1760 formed a fitting climax to the successes of the previous year, even if they seemed to contemporaries somewhat in the nature of an anti-climax. A French counter-attack on Quebec which seemed, and was, momentarily dangerous, was followed by happier news, culminating in the fall of Montreal. And this, rather than the fall of Quebec, put the finishing touches to the French empire in America. Nor was this all. The French outposts in the West Indies—Martinique, Dominica, St. Lucia and Grenada—surrendered before the end of 1762. Naval tactics played a prominent part in all these operations, for it was the presence of British fleets—Colville in America, Holmes in the West Indies, Pocock in Indian waters, Saunders in the Mediterranean and Rodney in the Channel—which prevented Choiseul

<sup>1</sup> From Garrick's pantomime, *Harlequin's Invasion* (1759).

### *Prussian Defeats, 1760-61*

from sending reinforcements to his hard-pressed armies, and so prevented an effective recovery of French naval power.

The situation in Germany alone was disquietening, for, as Frederick had been pressed back on most fronts and Ferdinand of Brunswick had no success to chronicle, a German war once again became unpopular in Britain. Pamphleteers were as violent with Pitt for subsidising Frederick as Pitt had once been angry with Carteret and Walpole for championing the electorate of Hanover. Both 1760 and 1761 were bad years for the Prussian army. A joint Austro-Russian army marched through the streets of Berlin. Austrian forces regained part of Silesia and the Swedes and the Russians, working together in strange collaboration, wrested the Baltic coastline from Prussian control. Frederick's military genius seemed at a complete discount. He saw the exhaustion of his country's resources, the reduction of his sore-trying army and even momentarily a crumbling of its iron discipline, but the King showed his best and most philosophic side in his real distress. A year earlier he had actually contemplated suicide, but now he strove manfully to pull his army together in the hope that the tide of fortune would bring him better things. And here, as luck would have it, fortune or events served him well. In 1762 the Czarina Elizabeth of Russia died. Her successor was a mad and dissipated prince who had developed a passionate enthusiasm for Frederick and his army; the eccentricities of Czar Peter III profoundly affected the policy of his nation since they led to Russia's withdrawal from the war, and gave Frederick the breathing space that he badly needed.

But this is to anticipate. By 1760, however important events in Germany might be to those who were trying to negotiate peace terms, they were really of incidental importance. The British war machine continued to sweep all before it. The fall of Montreal had brought all French Canada under British rule, while in India Eyre Coote defeated Lally at Wandewash and followed up his victory by bringing the remainder of the Carnatic under British control.

Spain's entry into the war was now, as Pitt realised, only a

### *William Pitt and the Seven Years' War*

matter of time, for the Spanish ministers, themselves divided, could not long withstand the subtleties of Choiseul's planning. If the French were, as some reported them to be, so exhausted that they might have to surrender to Britain, the Spaniards would be placed in an awkward and dangerous position. For the precarious balance of power in America and the West Indies would have shifted in Britain's favour and would therefore make Spain's humiliation, without French support, inevitable if war broke out. The courteous notes that passed between Madrid and Paris only slightly veiled the blunt, convincing truth. On the other hand, it was possible that Spain's entry into the war might turn the balance once again in France's favour, a victory which would suit exactly the policy of her new King, Charles III.<sup>1</sup> In any case, it was believed that Spain's entry into the war would strengthen France's hand in negotiating the peace; her resources and her fleet could be used as bargaining counters to gain a peace that would satisfy France and solve some of Spain's outstanding problems with Britain.

Events proved that few, if any, of the conclusions were justified. It was over the issue of war with Spain that Pitt resigned, as his colleagues refused to agree to the immediate declaration of war that he wanted. But his resignation neither affected the course of military events nor the eventual victory over Spanish arms. His plans had been so well prepared that the final victory, if not the peace which followed, had been winged by his foresight. The war went badly for Spain from the very start. Havana and Cuba, Manila and the Philippines fell into British hands and so consolidated Britain's power in American and Pacific waters. Neither for the first nor last time, a British force landed in Portugal to protect that country against a threatened Franco-Spanish offensive. The collapse of France and Spain, assisted by Russia's withdrawal from the war, made the termination of hostilities a vital necessity and one for which the peace-loving Bute had long been waiting.

<sup>1</sup> Don Carlos, the son of Elizabeth Farnese, who had been recently King of Naples. He had never forgiven the British for the ultimatum they had presented to him in 1742—either to withdraw his troops from north Italy or witness the bombardment of Naples.

## *Pitt Resigns*

### *4. Pitt's fall from power*

How Pitt's ministry ended is well known. George III succeeded his grandfather as King in 1760 and was so saturated with hatred for anything that reminded him of the late King that even Britain's splendid victories were dismissed as contemptuous reminders of the old gentleman's popularity. When George heard of the fall of Montreal, he expressed his feelings to Bute with the words: 'I can't help feeling that every such thing raises those I have no need to love.' The same letter referred to Pitt as a 'popular man' who 'is a true snake in the grass.' Bute encouraged the King to think thus and to foster the divisions that made the Cabinet meetings a continuous struggle. The crisis came over the declaration of war against Spain. Pitt urged that an immediate declaration of war would most profit the country. Temple, his brother-in-law, alone supported him, and so Pitt concluded rightly that a lone stand was an impossibility and retreat a betrayal of principle. 'Without,' he said at his last Cabinet meeting, 'having ever asked any one single employment in my life, I was called by my Sovereign and by the Voice of the People to assist the State when others had abdicated the service of it. That being so no one can be surprised that I will go on no longer since my advice is not taken. Being responsible I *will* direct, and will be responsible for nothing that I do not direct.' In October, 1761, Pitt resigned to the King's great delight and satisfaction.

This brief summary of the course of events demands closer attention, for the alienation of Pitt's colleagues from the leading minister had been going on almost as long as the ministry itself. The alliance between Pitt and Newcastle was *un mariage de convenance* which would be dissolved as soon as the circumstances which had brought it into being ceased to be of vital importance. Both Pitt and Newcastle had carried out their original bargains; Pitt had been principally, almost solely, responsible for the conduct of war and foreign policy, while Newcastle dealt with domestic affairs and the multivarious *trivia* of patronage and



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administration, for which he had both the inclination and the necessary ability. But there was very little sympathy between men temperamentally so far apart. Newcastle's complaints were perpetual: 'Such treatment,' he told Hardwicke, 'from one whom I have nourished and served is not and cannot be borne . . . he will be Treasurer, Secretary, General and Admiral. The first he shall not be whilst I am there. I . . . am determined to ask leave to retire the moment the session is over.'

The dissension was not confined to Pitt and Newcastle. Pitt was not an easy man to work with; he was masterful, often irritable (the gout from which he suffered so constantly was a predisposing cause) and sometimes downright rude. When he trod on Newcastle's corns, to speak colloquially, he trod hard. Gradually, the other members of the Cabinet came to resent his superiority while they did not cease to respect his ability. He had aroused the distrust of the Lord Chancellor, Hardwicke, by intervening in a legal issue without consulting the legal fraternity. The wealthy and influential Bedford had had repeated differences of opinion with him, dating from the time when he was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland; later he proved a true representative of the Russell tradition by preferring a peace to a war policy. This was not the end. Legge as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Newcastle as First Lord of the Treasury were together responsible for the country's finances. Pitt naturally made repeated calls on the Treasury for money to finance the war, sometimes for projects like the French raids, with which the majority of the Cabinet had little sympathy. Both men were on the cautious side and disliked the tremendous rise in the national debt as a result of the very heavy cost of the war.

To this clash of personality must then be added a good deal of disagreement over the actual conduct of the war. Some of the Cabinet found it difficult to step outside the old European policy which had been the mainstay of British diplomacy since their boyhood. They felt sure that Pitt's measures were strategically unwise and monstrously expensive of men, money and resources. But criticism was all in vain. The minister's imperious nature

### *Peace Negotiations, 1761*

would not brook interference in military or diplomatic matters under his control. Here he reigned supreme and might well have expected, as he saw success crown his efforts, that criticism and dislike would dissolve into gratitude.

It was far otherwise. The first real ground of trouble related to the start of negotiations to bring the war to an end. Pitt's character did not really make him a tactful or wise negotiator, for he was far too impatient and enthusiastic to indulge successfully in the bargaining and counter-bargaining that must precede a negotiated peace.

On each occasion that the negotiations were opened, the course of events compelled their failure. He could not conclude a peace in the year of victories, 1759, because no agreement could be reached over the terms to be granted to Prussia. Again, in 1761, the Prussian question caused difficulties. Foreseeing that he could not expect such good terms as Britain, Frederick agreed to the conclusion of a separate peace between France and Britain, providing France could be persuaded to leave Wesel and other Prussian possessions on the Rhine and to limit the help she was giving to Maria Teresa. In return for this, Britain herself would be obliged to repay Frederick for his aid by sacrificing some of her anticipated gains. Public opinion was divided over the retention of Canada or the rich sugar island of Guadeloupe. The American colonists and the West Indian planters (who feared that the annexation of another sugar colony would reduce their profits), represented by Pitt's own friend, the wealthy City alderman, William Beckford, were both in favour of keeping Canada. Pitt did not like the idea of surrendering any gains, but he realised the potential importance of a totally British North America as a market for British goods and as a barrier against French aggression. On another point he proved adamant. In 1713 the French had been given the privilege of fishing off the Newfoundland coast and drying their fish on the shore; contemporaries believed that these fisheries were extremely profitable, and with the deep-sea fishing off the St. Lawrence estuary, constituted an excellent training ground for French sailors. Choiseul

### *William Pitt and the Seven Years' War*

was equally convinced that the French must continue to control the fisheries.

And so the seemingly endless and subtle negotiations continued. Pitt was, perhaps, tactless, suspicious; Choiseul lacked sincerity. He was working for Spain's entry into the war and playing for time until the alliance between the two countries was satisfactorily consummated. In August, 1761, the two Bourbon powers agreed to re-affirm their friendship in the second Family Compact, Spain would enter the war as a co-belligerent if peace had not been reached by May 1st, 1762, while France for her part agreed not to make peace with Britain until Spain's grievances had been met. Pitt foresaw that the continuance of the negotiations was absurd. 'I admit,' he said, 'that I have written in strong language. But the Duc de Choiseul also threatened England, though in the cleverest and politest way imaginable, that he would continue the war if our court did not satisfy Madrid.'

Throughout the peace negotiations Pitt had lacked the full support of the Cabinet and, as his intention of making a firm stand against Spain became more obvious, the shadow of a peace party formed behind him. The Duke of Bedford contended that the expansion of Britain's possessions and the ruthless crushing of Bourbon power must provoke a reaction against Britain throughout Europe which the ministry would live to rue 'To drive the French entirely out of any naval power is fighting against nature, and can tend to no one good to this country, but on the contrary must excite all the naval powers of Europe to enter a confederacy against us, as adopting a system, viz, that of a monopoly of all naval power, which would be at least as dangerous to the liberties of Europe as that of Louis XIV was, which drew almost all Europe upon his back.'

Bedford had weighty supporters. George III and Bute, who had succeeded Holderness as Secretary of State in 1761, were both convinced that the war should be brought to an end as quickly as possible. Pitt had had to persuade the King that the disdainful adjectives 'bloody and expensive,' with which he intended to endow the war, were at least tactless; they were

### *Pitt and Bute*

replaced by 'expensive, but just and necessary,' but the King's opposition continued, unreasoning, almost pathological. The protracted negotiations confirmed his earlier decision that Pitt must leave office at the earliest opportunity. He was at this time in the hands of his friend and tutor, Bute, and in many ways a living reflection of that amiable nobleman's ideas. Bute was, however, more reasonable and experienced than the King. He also wanted to end the war but he did not wish to make an unfavourable peace. He had inherited Pitt's mantle at a peculiarly embarrassing time, and he was obliged by common sense and force of circumstances to appear as enthusiastic for the war as the outgoing minister. In this he had the support of the remainder of the ministry, even if the country failed to understand the subtle distinctions that were being drawn in the Cabinet meetings and only knew that the great minister had resigned.

The peace negotiations provided then the background to the diplomatic crisis which forced Pitt's resignation. He had urged that an immediate declaration of war against Spain would at least ensure that Spain should not receive the annual treasure from the Americas on which her treasury depended so much. His resignation did not affect, as we have seen, the issue of the war or the trend of events, as his policy had anticipated the future and had laid the way for the victories against Spain. Perhaps it made the conclusion of peace much easier, but even that is uncertain.

What is absolutely certain and beyond all shadow of doubt is that Pitt had been the 'Churchill' of the Seven Years' War. He had a hold over the popular imagination unrivalled by any of his contemporaries; he was the 'Great Commoner' who had never hesitated to take the people into his confidence and had relied throughout on native patriotism for the forces and equipment which won the war. It was this appeal to 'public morale' which made this war somewhat different to the conflicts which had preceded it, for the ordinary person felt that his future was personally involved in its outcome. Pitt was the most outstanding politician of the period. And, happily for the country, he

### *William Pitt and the Seven Years' War*

had very great abilities. His command over detail as well as his magnificent disregard of petty economy were both essentials of his success. He was not afraid of voicing his own opinion nor of the stony silence of his colleagues. He broke through the traditions so long associated with promotion in the armed forces by giving the higher commands to young men of talent. He could make rapid decisions and the very best use of the unexpected opportunities which mark the course of every war. He had, of course, his defects. He was irascible and dogmatic; he was too impatient to be a good negotiator or an equable colleague. It may even be suspected that his final ideas were strangely ill-defined; he knew that he was fighting for Britain, but what Britain was—and he was not alone in this—he would have found it difficult to answer. Nor for one moment would he have questioned the wisdom of replacing Franco-Spanish by British hegemony. But his defects were outweighed by his merits. Horace Walpole, rather an unsympathetic witness, thinking of his later years, wrote: 'Lord Chatham had been the arbiter of Europe; he affected to be the master of the English nobility; he failed, and remained with a train of domestics whom he could not pay. Yet British posterity will ever remember that, as Lord Chatham's first Administration had secured the most real and substantial benefits of his country, the puerilities of his second could not efface their lustre. Even the shameful Peace of Paris, concluded in defiance of him, could not rob the nation of all that he had acquired, nor could George III resign so much as Pitt had gained for George II. Half the empire of Hindostan, conquered under his administration by the spirit he had infused, still pours its treasures into the Thames. Canada was subdued by his councils, and Spain and France, that yet dread his name, attest the reality of his success.'

'The reality of his success'; this is the measure of Pitt's talents in war. His greatness, as the same author had commented in another place, 'was unfinished,' but incomplete as it was, it so greatly overshadowed all contemporary politicians that the fulness of his claim to genius remains unchallenged.

## *The Treaty of Paris*

### *5. The Treaty of Paris*

Pitt's resignation, the outbreak of the Spanish War, the successes which followed, had a natural sequel in the resumption of negotiations with France. Although Bute had been quite as eager, at any rate superficially, to bring the war to a successful conclusion as Pitt, he was far more accommodating in his approach to Choiseul. Without further argument, he agreed to the restoration of St Lucia, Guadeloupe and Goree to France. Further victories—Granby's at Wilhelmstahl and Pocock's and Albermarle's at Havana, temporarily interrupted negotiations, but at last the Preliminaries of Peace were signed by Choiseul for France, by Grimaldi for Spain and by Bedford for Britain, on November 3rd, 1762.

If the Treaty of Paris did not completely eliminate all future causes of hostility between England and Spain, it did at least save Spain from what might well have been the worst possible results of her misguided action. She recovered Cuba and the Philippines, an indication that Britain did not intend to overthrow the balance of power in American waters. In return, Spain agreed to give up her absurd claim to take part in the fisheries off the Newfoundland coast and recognised the British right to cut logwood in Honduras. The British gain was somewhat reduced by an agreement to demolish the fortifications, which had naturally enhanced Britain's position in the Caribbean Sea. Britain acquired Florida in return for Cuba. This peninsula rounded off the most southerly of the American colonies, Georgia, and so contributed to Britain's control over the eastern coastline. One further point closed the Treaty as far as Spain was concerned. For the loss that she incurred through the cession of Florida, France agreed to compensate her by handing over Louisiana. The Treaty of Paris treated Spain generously, so generously that it encouraged rather than terminated the continuance of the Family Compact, and did not materially lessen Spanish enmity towards England.

It was obvious that Britain would retain some at least of her

### *William Pitt and the Seven Years' War*

conquests from France, but the degree of generosity towards the fallen enemy was less evident. One group of British statesmen believed that it was to Britain's best advantage to keep a weakened rather than a totally-exhausted France in being. The question as to whether Canada or Guadeloupe should be retained caused the greatest discussion. Canada, it was said, must become British to prevent the recurrence of another dispute with France which would lead to a renewal of the war. The critics of this argued that it would not achieve what was proposed without the annexation of Louisiana in the south or, contrariwise, that it was unnecessary to annex so much territory to afford a barrier to further dispute. Furthermore, such a settlement was unduly expensive as an army would have to be stationed in Canada, whereas the annexation of the rich sugar island of Guadeloupe would restore the balance between the northern and tropical colonies, and would not necessitate the upkeep of an expensive defence force.

It was at last decided to retain Canada on the ground that this was the best way to avert a future dispute with France. The West Indian planters approved this decision, partly because they did not want the British sugar market saturated with further competitors, and partly because they did not want to see the slave trade diverted to foreign islands<sup>1</sup>. In acquiring Canada, Britain gained a vast territory, sparsely populated with Frenchmen and therefore open to development by British settlers and capital.

There were equally startling changes in Asia, where Duplex's ambitious schemes had melted away before Clive's great victories and British naval superiority. Whereas a few years earlier the French controlled a great area, French power was now confined to five—unfortified—settlements. Almost incidentally, the British East India Company had secured an empire from which the British were to draw vast wealth.

<sup>1</sup> The slave traders wanted to annex Guadeloupe; the Liverpool merchants declared that 12,437 slaves had been exported to the French islands between 1759 and 1762. As a result the owners of the British plantations asserted that they were under-supplied with the best-quality slaves.

### *The Defects of the Treaty*

The remainder of the settlement demands little attention. None of the African colonies were valuable, but Britain kept Senegal and the French recovered Goree. The European issues were determined, except in as far as the British recovered Minorca in return for the Breton island of Belleisle, by the Peace of Hubertusburg, which was virtually a re-establishment of the *status quo*

What were the defects of the Treaty of Paris? Even Horace Walpole called it 'shameful.' Pitt was vehemently opposed to it, and, even without his arguments, there was a widely held opinion that the ministry, as at Utrecht in 1713, had betrayed the country. Pitt's arguments fall under three separate headings. Firstly, the terms were far more generous than those which he had tried to secure long before the new series of conquests, Havana, Manila, St. Lucia and Martinique. True as this was, it is doubtful whether it would have been politically expedient for Britain to have insisted on 'every pound of flesh.' Secondly, he asserted that the treaty had ignored some important points. In North America the retention by France of the Newfoundland fisheries with the drying stations of St. Pierre and Miquelon was certain, as he foresaw correctly, to cause further friction between France and Britain. In Africa the restoration of Goree to France nullified the value of the annexation of Senegal. Finally, in the West Indies France had recovered several islands of vital economic and strategic importance: Guadeloupe, Martinique, Marie Galante and St. Lucia. The third point was moral: by deserting Frederick of Prussia Britain had lost prestige and made impossible the continuance of the alliance which acted as the main barrier to French ambitions. Pitt's speech lasted nearly three and a half hours, but it was in its effect one of his least successful orations. He was suffering from gout and general exhaustion, spoke in so feeble a voice and in so grandiloquent a style that he failed to convince the House.

But his arguments had some substance. It was clear that the Anglo-Prussian alliance, which had been the steel girder of Pitt's European strategy, could not survive Bute's tactless



*William Pitt and the Seven Years' War*

diplomacy. Always irritated by Britain's refusal to send a fleet to the Baltic and angered by the failure of the subsidy of 1762, Frederick regarded Bute's decision as sheer treachery. If he had himself behaved in this way, it would not have occasioned much comment but, like so many others, when his purposes were crossed, he could apply a stern moral judgment which he would never have accepted with regard to his own conduct. The legend of 'perfidious Albion,' supported indeed by more than one instance of broken faith, died hard in European history and has re-appeared more than once since the eighteenth century. Examined from a different angle the continuance of the alliance seems of more doubtful value. Except on the rather negative argument that both powers were hostile to France, there was little in common between them, a central or northern European power mainly interested in aggrandisement within the boundaries of the Holy Roman Empire or eastern Europe, and the maritime power of Britain with great new responsibilities in all quarters of the world. At a later date Pitt, and other foreign ministers, tried to resurrect the alliance, but had they been successful it is difficult to see what would have been Britain's real gain. Prussia might have exerted a restraining influence over France and Holland in the War of American Independence, but even her intervention would not have affected the final issue.

The real diplomatic defect of the Treaty lay, as Bedford saw, in the nature of the victory. England had crushed her enemies and extorted profitable gains which had compelled the pendulum of the balance of power to swing in her favour. Other countries were disquietened by the way in which the rather delicate mechanism of international rivalry had been upset. A reaction occurred in which the leading theme was distrust of the victorious power who had gained so much of the world's territory and whose Navy bestrode the seas. The diplomatic isolation in which Britain found herself at the beginning of the War of American Independence may be traced to the reaction in Europe at the extent of the British victory. Nevertheless, looked at fairly and squarely, the gains were prodigious.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CHANGING FACE OF ENGLAND, 1714-1760

#### 1. *The predominance of land*

Land was the formative, ruling influence throughout the eighteenth century and the governing factor in both politics and society. The possession of it afforded, as its advocates were wont to assert, justification for every abuse which crept into political life. A great area of land, well-tilled farmland, sheep pastures or parklands and Arcadian groves which surrounded the newly-erected classical mansions of the wealthy, was owned by very few people, whose leading members formed the British aristocracy.

But the nobility was not a closed class nor, as far as birth counted, an exclusively titled one. Although mortality among even the children of the very rich was high, their families were very large. The younger sons—such was Pitt the elder—were often more or less portionless and had to make their way in the professions. When they had done this and acquired their modicum of worldly wealth, by some queer atavistic or social instinct, they usually purchased an estate, to end their days as they had begun them as members of the landed gentry. Apart then from the land-owning nobility, there were a great many lesser landowners who formed the invaluable squirearchy of rural England. They exercised a controlling influence in local and to some extent in central politics, for their contact with the local labourers was often greater and more effective than that of some neighbouring but absent peer. As Justices of the Peace their powers of regulating and controlling rural life were simply immense. The greater and lesser landowners constituted the

### *The Changing Face of England*

real ruling classes of the country, the controllers of England's destiny and the guardians of her, and their, interests.

It may seem curious to insist on the supremacy of land in a period when commerce and industry were just about to exert a greater influence on political and social life than they had ever done before. The significance of political crises can be gauged by the prices on the Exchange or the measured opinion of the Directors of the Bank of England. But the power of the City, so influential in Whig circles, was not, as it has since become, detached from the ownership of land. The greatest nobles never disdained, as they did in France, to interest themselves in business projects; from the land flowed much of the wealth that made the expansion of trade possible. On the other hand, the profits of trade and industry often flowed back again into the land. Dutch merchants, who subscribed largely to the national debt, played an important part in the life of the City. Gerald Van Neck was perhaps the best known; he was rich but landless. By the end of the century, his family name was Vanneck, and the head of the family was an English peer (Lord Huntingfield) who lived on a country estate with a fine house (Heveningham Hall in Suffolk) designed and decorated by James Wyatt. In the same way, East India merchants, enriched by the spoils of the Asiatic trade, returned home, bought land and, with the land, the influence that land-ownership gave them in the state. Industrial and commercial activity that was wholly divorced from land and land-ownership had a relatively small place in early eighteenth-century England.

Land-ownership in the reigns of the first two Georges expressed the most fundamental fact in English life, since all activities were eventually centred around it. It provided the money with which men patronised the arts or invested in trade and industry. The purchase of a country estate gave the merchant and the industrialist the right to take their place in country society. It was land that opened the door of the House of Commons to the prospective member. The most significant documents in the history of eighteenth-century England are neither treaties nor

## *Agriculture*

acts of Parliament; they are the hundreds of thousands of musty legal documents, conveyances, leases and wills, that tell of the sale, purchase, entail and inheritance of land. Dry, dull and sterile as they may well appear to be, each yet shows the vital significance of land in this period, the common multiple which brought together economics, politics and society under one common heading.

### *2 Agriculture*

England was still primarily an agricultural country; even the major industrial developments which took place in the last fifty years were by comparison no more than scars on the earth's surface. Farming, whether arable or pastoral, remained the country's leading industry. This meant that a very large percentage of England's population lived on or were in some way connected with the cultivation of the soil. Even in London itself cows were grazed and milked in the city's midst, whilst no town was unaffected by the marketing activities of the farmers who lived just outside it. The rural nature of England's civilisation not only affected life and politics, so that ownership of land seemed inseparable from political power, but was in fact the frame within which society lived its life and upon which ultimately a great deal of England's wealth, power and industry depended.

Although England was a country of large estates, it was a land of small farms. The farm's size naturally varied with the custom and economic lay-out of the district in which it was situated. There had always been small farms in Wales, where scattered hamlets made up the social framework of the country. In the compact English village, the farm of moderate acreage, too large to be farmed only by the farmer and his own family, was most typical. This meant that while there were still many yeomen farmers who owned the farms they cultivated, there was also an increasing number of tenant farmers who held their farms

### *The Changing Face of England*

on leases. Around the farmer lived his labourers. They were placed on a low level in the social scale but, as they held the job their fathers had before them, there was a sense of stability in their poverty-stricken lives lacking in a more mechanistic age.

This society, in many ways so static, was to some extent shattered by the enclosure movement. Some land had been enclosed, mainly in the interests of sheep farmers, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but the greater part of England still remained unenclosed. Although the ensuing enclosure movement had some tragic consequences, there were excellent reasons for carrying enclosure into effect. Unenclosed land was poor and constituted a definite hindrance to improvement. It was not surprising that in an age of great estates the old system of promiscuous strips, a haphazard and uneconomical relic of the Middle Ages, should have been swept away, piece by piece, with the full consent of Lords and Commons. Any landlord who wished to hedge the open fields in which the villagers held, by immemorial custom, certain rights, put forward an enclosure bill which was in its turn referred to the local commissioners. The latter heard the villagers' complaints and settled the amount of compensation which was to be given to them for the loss of their privileges. Needless to say the verdict was nearly always given in favour of the landlord. With such overwhelming support for enclosure, its opponents fought a losing battle.

Enclosure, even at its start, influenced the development of English agriculture and the structure of society. Oliver Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* (1769), whether it refers to his native village of Lissoy in Ireland or whether it represents a composite picture of what he believed to be the evil effects of enclosure, expressed admirably what a great many of the opponents of enclosure felt:

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay  
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade,  
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;  
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

### *Enclosure*

His argument, too emphatic as it was, had some substance. 'The poor,' wrote an unprejudiced observer, Arthur Young, a little later, 'may say and with truth, "Parliament may be tender of property; all I know is that I had a cow and an Act of Parliament has taken it away from me."' In other words the Enclosure movement deprived the villagers of some cherished rights and depressed the less intelligent and reliable into the numbers of the poor who sought a refuge in the workhouses. Even the more discerning man sometimes found himself a landless labourer or a worker in one of the new factories. But the picture must not be overdrawn. Apart from depriving the villager of certain customary rights, enclosure only accentuated various trends already in existence. It was a slow process which did not by itself create a class of landless labourers nor lead to the disappearance of the yeoman farmer or cause the rise of the tenant farmer.

Despite the social evils which resulted from enclosure, it was economically expedient and necessary. The corn-growing areas of the east, north-east and east Midlands were the chief districts to benefit, as the enclosures of the eighteenth, unlike those of the seventeenth century, were designed to increase production of corn rather than to hedge sheep. It was more profitable to grow corn, for which there was an increasing demand in view of the rising population, or to breed cattle and sheep, on large enclosed farms where capital was available to support improvements.

The movement towards enclosure, which did not reach its climax for another forty or fifty years, reflected the dominance of the wealthy landed gentry in the country. It must also be coupled with the growing attention paid to more scientific methods of farming, which can be traced back to the late seventeenth century and to the interest aroused by improvements made in farming in the Low Countries. In fact this represented the same inter-relation of scientific curiosity and economic necessity which the course of industrial change also revealed. For while there was much sheer curiosity, an increasingly populous England required vital improvements in food production, in the

### *The Changing Face of England*

provision of winter food for livestock and in the breeding of cattle. The important changes that took place in all these spheres of farming activity mark the real beginning of modern agrarian history.

The landed gentry of eighteenth-century England included many intelligent men who were interested in improving farming methods as well as in increasing their own profits. Walpole's brother-in-law, Viscount Townshend of Raynham in Norfolk, who had spent some time in the Netherlands, represents the enlightened landed proprietor. Familiarly known as 'Turnip Townshend,' he began to use the turnip, hitherto known only as a garden product, as a cleaning crop. Until now it had been customary to leave a field fallow at the end of three or four years to prevent the soil from becoming exhausted. Townshend saw that if turnips or artificial grasses were used as a 'fallow' crop the ground would not remain sterile. There was yet another consequence to this; turnips could be used as winter feed for the sheep and cattle which had languished as thin, half-starved animals if they had not been killed off and salted. Nor was Townshend's interest in agriculture exceptional. Other land-owners displayed an intelligent enthusiasm in applying to English agriculture new methods, many of which were already practised on the Continent.

The quality of the livestock needed to be improved before mixed farming became really prosperous. At the beginning of the century both cattle and sheep were of poor quality as there was no apparent limit on the numbers who grazed promiscuously on the common lands. Enclosure was the first move in the right direction. Robert Bakewell of Dishley Grange, near Loughborough, a tenant farmer, achieved a European reputation as a stock-breeder. He delighted to show visitors round his farm, always leaving the best animal to the last to elicit the most admiration. He was most interested in fattening the Longhorns for the meat market, but his improvements in sheep breeding were more enduring. He had many followers, including Charles Colling of Ketton, near Darlington, who bred the famous Durham

### *Communications*

ox, a show animal which weighed 3,800 pounds or nearly three times as much as the ordinary animal. The result of all these improvements was soon apparent; better animals in every way, whether Shorthorns, North Devons or Southdown sheep, stocked the farms and helped to fill the pocket of the farmer

The improvement in the actual implements used in farming was heralded by Bakewell's young contemporary, Jethro Tull of Basildon in Berkshire. He greatly improved the method of sowing by inventing a drill which enabled the seeds to be sown in the right quantity and at a uniform spacing, but it was long before the drill was brought into general use.

The introduction of progressive methods, the formation of big estates and the move towards the elimination of the remaining unenclosed land, as well as the increasing availability of capital, were all to the good; in general the period was a prosperous era in the history of arable and pastoral farming. As there was a considerable demand at home and abroad, the price of corn remained satisfactory without being excessive. Wages and prices remained fairly stable. Bad weather sometimes led to inferior harvests, but this was one of the most interesting and happiest periods in English agriculture.

### *3. Communications*

There are few things that the modern Englishman finds so difficult to understand in past ages as the badness and slowness of communications on which, of course, all political and social intercourse, as well as the volume of trade and commerce, ultimately depend. An hour's delay on a modern train journey is to-day regarded with irritation. Then every long journey was something of an adventure, of which delay was by far and away the least evident and unpleasant characteristic. Highwaymen<sup>1</sup> clustered on the waste lands around the great roads leading out

<sup>1</sup> The best known of all highwaymen, Richard Turpin *alias* John Palmer, was executed at York on April 3rd, 1739.



### *The Changing Face of England*

of London to the country where travellers were fairly frequent and concealment easy. The bad state of the roads, the inadequacy of the local inns (there was one notable improvement in the period: travellers were able to demand that a warming-pan should be placed between the sheets), the springless nature of the coach (until after the first half of the century) and the occasional unreliability of the coachman were a source of continual anxiety to the traveller; 'the London Mail,' reads a Bristol journal in 1770, 'did not arrive so soon by several hours as usual on Monday, owing to the mailman getting a little intoxicated on his way between Newbury and Marlborough and falling from his horse into a hedge, where he was found asleep, by means of his dog' Every traveller, from Daniel Defoe at the beginning to Arthur Young at the end of the century, complained about the state of the roads: 'I know not,' said Young, 'in the whole range of language, terms sufficiently expressive to describe this infernal road [from Liverpool to Wigan]. . . . Let me seriously caution all travellers who may accidentally purpose to travel this terrible country to avoid it as they would the devil; for a thousand to one but they break their necks or their limbs by overthrows or breaking down.' Varying in relation to the soil of the county where they were situated, often deeply rutted and frequently flooded in wet weather, a vast number of roads constituted a form of obstacle race to the would-be traveller at all times and a quagmire in winter.

It is easy to explain why this should be so. There was no real authority responsible for their upkeep and repair. Nominally the village community through which the road passed was responsible for seeing that the road was kept in a passable state of repair, but the work that was carried out, at the instruction of some vigilant Justice of the Peace, was at best irregular and imperfect. A new device, much used after 1750, had been introduced to supplement, and was later in part to supersede, this haphazard arrangement. This was the turnpike trust.

The turnpike trusts consisted of local authorities who agreed to be responsible for keeping certain roads, or parts of roads,

### *The Condition of the Roads*

in good repair on condition that they were given the right to levy tolls on all travellers passing over them. Although their activities were subject to the general laws passed by Parliament, there was no supervision over their expenditure or general efficiency. They increased at a prodigious rate, especially in the second half of the century; the one hundred and sixty of 1748 had increased to five hundred and fifty by 1770. But the results were very uneven. Their unpopularity led to riots, as many travellers were convinced that the improvement in the surfacing of the roads was merely nominal. Later Arthur Young wrote. 'The turnpikes, as they have the assurance to call them, and the hardness to make one pay for! From Chepstow to the half-way house between Newport and Cardiff they continue mere rocky lanes, full of huge stones as big as one horse and abominable holes.' But there was, of course, another side to the picture. Some of the turnpike trusts were conscientious in repairing the roads and in keeping them, as far as possible, in fair condition

Yet it was really impossible to improve the roads much until the technique of road-construction was better understood. There is one man, John Metcalf, who merits distinction as a road-builder in this period. A courageous character, blinded at six, Metcalf never allowed his lack of sight to prevent him from taking a full part in all the ordinary activities of life, for he fought in the Scottish wars and even rode races. As an ingenious engineer he discovered a method for making a firm surface through boggy land, and earned the gratitude of all travellers in his own county of Yorkshire and in Lancashire by the excellence of the roads constructed under his surveillance.

Even the best roads in the world could not, however, have dealt satisfactorily with the increasing demand for transport of goods and passengers. Packhorses, remembered to-day by the many charming narrow bridges over which they passed, formed one of the most convenient methods of transporting goods, including coal, across country. It was difficult, slow and expensive to take goods by ordinary wagons any distance. The coach

### *The Changing Face of England*

was reserved to passengers and relatively small parcels. It was as yet slow and uncomfortable. It took two days to cover the journey from Oxford to London and nearly a week to reach the extreme south-west of England.

Thus the inadequacy of England's roads formed a deterrent to industrial advance, for it was as difficult to transport finished goods across country as it was to bring together the raw materials needed for their manufacture. That was why the canal became so important. Navigable rivers had already been used to supplement the coastal traffic, to ease transport by carrying goods in bulk at an inexpensive charge, but, even with the improvements resulting from the deepening of the river channels and the building of locks, a great area of England still remained unaffected. The initiative of the third Duke of Bridgewater and the constructive genius of his illiterate engineer, James Brindley, opened the canal era. The cost of transporting coal from the Duke's deposits at Worsley, near Manchester, was so high that the profits were small. In 1759 Brindley agreed to cut a canal between Worsley and Manchester. The opening of the Canal in 1761 at once halved the cost of coal in Manchester and yet increased the Duke's profits. Brindley was kept busy in the next eleven years—so busy that it is said his labours contributed to his death—constructing canals which helped to span the North and Midlands of England. Although the canal boom proper did not come until 1793, what was already constructed enabled heavy goods to be carried across the country at relatively little cost.

By 1760 these improvements were only in their first stages. River and coastal traffic counted for more than that of the canal. The passenger continued to jolt in his coach along the rutted roads, counting the number of his bruises and cursing the turnpike keepers. The industrialist continued to deplore the absence of any real means for exploiting his manufacturers. Convoys of pack-horses trudged slowly through the mud. Yet a beginning had been made which was of the utmost significance for the future economic life of the country.

## *Changes in Industry*

### *4 The beginnings of the Industrial Revolution*

Between 1714 and 1760 the Industrial Revolution represented no more than a small stream trickling through the rural countryside, but the statement requires some modification. Industrial change between 1714 and the present day has never had the continuity or constancy of most streams; it has come in a series of bursts and dwindled or changed direction as a result of economic crises or war. Nor was there any one single Industrial Revolution which began about 1720 and ended about 1830. The two words really described a series of industrial revolutions which have influenced and moulded economic life and which, the discovery of atomic energy suggests, is still far from complete. In a limited sense, the Industrial Revolution may be identified with the period of history during which the machine replaced man as the fundamental instrument in manufacture, and as a result of which the factory system with all its many associations, capital for investment and labour to be regulated, replaced the old domestic system which had until then predominated in nearly every part of Europe.

When George I came to the throne, the domestic system of industry flourished everywhere in Britain. The woollen industry, to mention the most important manufacture, was not confined to any one centre, but was widely dispersed throughout the countryside. Modern industry is now associated with large factories and the word manufacturer implies a wealthy man who owns or runs the factory, but certainly does not work with his own hands. Neither of these terms meant anything of the sort at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The cottages and farms of rural England were the actual centres of industry and the manufacturer was the worker who took the leading part in the process of manufacture. Weaving and spinning were generally supplementary to the real business of farming, and, instead of taking place under one roof, were widely distributed through the cottages and farms of the district. Thus, despite the rashness of the generalisation, it is true that the woollen industry was partly

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a by-product of agriculture. The spinning-wheel hummed beside the fire in the long winter evenings when farming was impracticable. From the spinner the cloth passed to the weaver who worked his loom at home. This was the domestic system which continued to operate long after industrial developments had transformed the textile manufacture.

But a change had already begun. The housewife at her spinning-wheel and the weaver at his loom depended in the long run on the merchant clothier who supplied them with raw material and sold the finished product. This meant that the manufacturer, whether spinner or weaver, was obliged to live on the wages which he acquired as a result of his labour. It is well to stress this as social historians, in their zeal to disclose the evil results of the factory system, have often painted the industrial worker under the domestic system in rosy colours. Latterly at least his condition was far worse than that of the factory worker, for he had become an exploited and sweated victim of mercantile capitalism. Within the characteristics of the domestic system there was therefore a great deal which pointed sooner or later towards the evolution of the factory system and the rise of the great industrialist.

Other factors also contributed to stimulate industrial change. There was a definite increase in the amount of Britain's import and export trade towards the end of the seventeenth century which continued at an ever-expanding rate during the eighteenth century. While there is little doubt that industrial output caused expanding commerce and vice versa, it is most likely that the increasing demand for British goods was a major incentive to increased industrial production. The history of the Bank of England (established in 1694), and of the reconstructed East India Company afford convincing evidence of the great wealth which was pouring into the country as a result of Britain's trade.

Expanding commerce reacted on the Industrial Revolution in two ways. It encouraged England's industry to produce an increasing array of goods and it provided a residue of wealth

### *The Scientific 'Spirit'*

which could be used to promote industrial advance. In fact the inventions would have been useless without the wealth of the merchant capitalists. If Arkwright's scientific originality may be challenged, no criticism can be made of his business efficiency nor that of many another contemporary manufacturer. Where did the money come from to finance the early factories? The evidence suggests that landowners, country gentlemen, merchants, working manufacturers and even professional men were among the financial backers of the new factory system. And, broadly, the industrial output was proportionate to the country's increasing corporate wealth.

If demand and supply prepared the way for the change, the scientific 'spirit' was another essential ingredient. To some extent economic necessity fathered this 'spirit,' for each of the major inventions came into being to meet an economic demand. But this does not mean that there were no signs of initiative founded on sheer scientific curiosity. The amateur scientist was a familiar figure in the cultured society of the previous century; his interests were reflected in the foundation of the Royal Society, to which historians have paid too little attention. The number of patents registered in the course of the eighteenth century proves that inventive curiosity and a greater sense of precision were features of daily life, which naturally influenced industrial development. This made possible the precision tools and instruments without which modern and even eighteenth-century industrial development in its later stages is unthinkable.

Very slowly the momentum of change increased. It partly depended on communications. Until the surface of the roads was improved and it was possible to convey heavy loads by canal, there could be no striking increase in the country's industrial output. The actual changes which had occurred by 1760 were, by comparison with later developments, practically imperceptible. Only here and there a new many-storied mill in some well-watered Pennine valley denoted future change.

For it was in textiles, and above all in cotton, that the new

### *The Changing Face of England*

inventive skill first found a real outlet. The Lombes' machine for throwing silk was the most fascinating of the early inventions. It is said that the secret of the machine was brought back to England from Italy by John Lombe in 1716 (and further that for filching the invention he later fell a victim to Italian poison). His brother, Thomas, capitalised the new discovery in a commodious factory built on an island in the river Derwent which employed no less than two hundred hands. He did well out of his business, emerging with a knighthood and great riches, while other silk factories used his process more and more. But the shape of the future was not sewed in silk; for political and economic reasons it never played an important part in textile change.

The aura of romance, if a somewhat drab one, was reserved for the cotton industry. The word 'cotton,' which had been used in England for some time, described a cloth quite different in texture from that of the modern product. At the end of the seventeenth century cottons imported from India became exceptionally popular. The new-found popularity of the cloth stimulated the development of the cotton industry in Lancashire where the climatic conditions (cotton spinning demands a moist atmosphere and an even temperature) were ideal for cotton, if not for man. Despite the woollen manufacturers' opposition, more and more cotton mills were built, especially in and around the growing town of Manchester. For a long time yet, however, domestic industry carried on side by side with the new factory system.

The first improvement, important because it was the lineal ancestor of all future textile inventions, came with the invention of the Flying Shuttle by John Kay in 1733. Kay was a twenty-six year old weaver and mechanic of an inventive turn of mind. His Flying Shuttle was a decided improvement on the old weaving loom, as it allowed the weaving of a much broader cloth than had been formerly possible, at a more rapid rate.

The use to which the Flying Shuttle was put actually disturbed the economic balance of the industry since it quickened the

## *Coal and Steel*

process of weaving without accelerating the operation of spinning. It was now necessary to find some means of spinning yarn fast enough to keep pace with the weaver. This explains the invention of the Spinning Jenny and the Water-frame a little later. Thus, as the tide of the Seven Years' War flowed on and as the new King ascended the throne, developments in textiles were still limited in range

At the beginning of the century the iron and steel industries were in a bad way. Increasing demand for British timber had led to so great a deforestation that it was questionable whether there was likely to be enough woodland in the future to produce the charcoal needed to turn the iron-ore into a workable metal. As a result the number of blast furnaces had decreased steadily and the fifty-nine still working in 1720 were likely to be diminished in number further unless another fuel which would suit the technique of manufacture could be discovered. Coal was the obvious answer, but coal in its pure state could not be used because its sulphur content was absorbed by the molten iron and so made the finished product unworkable. There had been many abortive experiments to eliminate these fumes before the Quaker manufacturer, Abraham Darby, solved the problem by using coke instead of coal in his blast furnace. His method, which was improved by his son, the second Abraham Darby, did not attract much attention and was not widely adopted in the first half of the century. The use of coke on a large scale had to wait until the invention of Henry Cort some thirty years later. But if it was only later that the iron industry ceased to depend on charcoal, the significance of the change was already known to the more enlightened. 'Nature,' said the economist, Postlethwayt, in 1747, 'had given us an immense plenty both of iron ore and pit coal. . . . British pit coal will come almost as cheap near our collieries as charcoal does in Sweden or Russia.'

The story of developments in the steel industry was much the same, for it too was impeded by the crudity of the technique of manufacture. The steel produced was not hard enough to



### *The Changing Face of England*

make the finely tempered steel instruments for which there was a growing demand. In 1750 a Doncaster clock smith, Benjamin Huntsman, discovered a way of making harder steel, which was followed by the Sheffield manufacturers who discovered his process. Although the technique was secret enough to give Sheffield a lead in the steel world that it has never relinquished, Huntsman's process was soon widely known and used elsewhere in England and on the Continent. If Sheffield was specialising in cutlery, Birmingham was already known as the 'toy-shop' of Europe, employing thousands of workers in the manufacture of small metal-ware which could be used at home or exported to the Continent or America.

The future of the metal, and even of the textile industries, depended ultimately on coal-mining, for coal was the coming source of power and locomotion. The output of coal was steadily going up—from two and a half million tons in 1700 to six millions in 1770—but this represented only a moderate increase in view of the growing industries, large export trade and domestic needs of an increasing population. Circumstances explain why this should be so. The transport of coal, except by sea from Newcastle or Sunderland, presented an insuperable problem until England was webbed by canals. Industry which made use of coal was obliged to find a site near the pits since it was impracticable to transport coal by road in any bulk. The technique of mining, still crude and primitive, did not assist production, as, with few exceptions, the pits were shallow and poorly drained. Furthermore the collieries were owned by landed proprietors who were more interested in direct profits than in the outlay of further capital. They preferred to lease the collieries for rent or royalties on the amount of coal produced, and to charge heavily for the way-leaves which ran, inevitably, over their land from the pit-head to the nearest collecting or distributing centre. Much capital was invested in coal-mining, not always wisely, but it eventually found its way into the profitable collection and conveyance of coal by ship from Newcastle to London. The coal miners themselves still lived on a lower social

### *Josiah Wedgwood*

level than the factory worker, often isolated from the ordinary world, uncared for by Church or State.

The pattern of the future was nevertheless worked out in coal. Glass, printing and pottery industries, as well as textiles and metal, were all subsidiary to 'King Coal.' During the period under review various improvements in equipment and technique took place in the former industries, not least of all in the pottery industry of the Five Towns. The patron saint of the new development was the attractive Josiah Wedgwood. He began his career as a potter when he was apprenticed to the industry as a boy of nine at Burslem in Staffordshire. Twenty years later he became a master potter and started his own works. He soon showed the world the noble extent of his talents and artistry. Using the fine clays of the western counties and Thames flints (for glazing), the lovely cream ware which he produced out-classed all possible rivals. In 1769 he opened his great Etruria works, which employed no less than ten thousand workers at the time of Arthur Young's visit some years later. Wedgwood was an artist, scientist and scholar, by instinct rather than teaching since he was largely self-taught. He was good to his employees, but a ruthless critic of bad work, smashing any pot which showed the least imperfection and marking in chalk the characteristic words: 'This won't do for Josiah Wedgwood.' His appreciation of ancient classical designs was instinctive and popular, and he employed the great designers of his time, Flaxman, Reynolds and Roubillac, for the ornamentation of his pottery. Shrewd and intelligent, he introduced many technical improvements, including an engine-lathe for turning (he was using steam power to grind his materials as early as 1782), which were recognised by his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society. Although he did not die until 1795, his success was immediate, and his products were in great demand at home, in the colonies and on the Continent.

With Wedgwood, one of the most attractive of the self-made industrial capitalists, we have stepped well beyond the limits of the period, but his rise may be regarded as symbolic of what the

### *The Changing Face of England*

future had in store. There were comparatively few radical changes in the economic framework of the country before 1760 although the materials of change were there ready and waiting for the impetus that would start the machines going. For the distinctive characteristics of the industrial age, the centralisation of industry, the division of labour, the specialisation of function, expanding markets, the absorption of smaller businesses into the larger undertakings, do not appear in the first half of the century. Yet these first few decades did disclose the potentialities of the future, the improvements in road making, the construction of canals, the expansion of the cotton industry, the inventive capacity of the mechanic and, above all, the expanding riches of the country, formed a fitting prelude to the future.

### *5 Society, Manners and Customs*

Historians have always been so concerned with the activities of politicians and diplomats that they have neglected to record the doings of men of all types and classes. In so doing they have perpetrated a strange dichotomy, for they have separated the government from the social environment in which it functioned and which largely conditioned it. If we were able to examine the social forebears and characteristic conduct of the members of both Houses of Parliament, we might gain a far more rewarding impression of the motives and ideas of eighteenth-century statesmen than we would by merely analysing the country's foreign policy. For there is no doubt that the latter to some extent depended upon the conventions and instincts of the society which promoted it. A country's government should represent the whole people of the country, whereas in fact in eighteenth-century England it reflected the ideals of the ruling class. While this may justify the close attention paid to aristocratic society of the century, it still leaves the picture incomplete. The sparsely recorded annals of the poor and middle class

### *Upper-Class Society*

who made up the majority of the population merit far more attention than recent historians have given them

Even so, eighteenth-century society was dominated by the ideas and customs of the country's upper classes. The English ruling class consisted of the landed proprietors, well favoured by long traditions of service and responsibility and influenced by trade and commerce as well as by land ownership. Headed by the greater nobility such a society proliferated into country gentry and city-merchants. What of their life? The mirror that reflects the social activities of upper-class society is curiously double-sided. The first impression is distinctly pleasing, a pretty garden full of flowers and terraced lawns. Whether the houses represented a former age or were modern buildings, their proportions were usually fine and dignified. The furniture which they contained lacked warmth and comfort but it had the attraction of old age or the grace of good craftsmanship. The clothes were rich and colourful, if expensive; the fourth Duke of Bedford paid sixty-four guineas in 1757 to have a 'rich suit of crimson velvet' embroidered with gold. If business was conducted in a leisurely way, it was not done irresponsibly. The great nobles often gave the running of their estates their close personal consideration and were well served by faithful bailiffs and agents, like the Butchers, Becudas and Bransons employed by the Bedford family. The way in which they spent their leisure varied according to taste and inclination. More was eaten and a great deal more was drunk than in a later century, but then a healthy appetite was a natural sequel to a day in the hunting field. The ordinary squire, the Sir Roger de Coverley of many a village, probably read very few books and was more at home with his hounds and his gamekeepers than in the world of taste. Others, the few and exceptional, set the fashion in the world of literature and art. And so by imitation taste flowed from higher to lower levels and was found naturally, as it has always been, in society that was to some extent immune from its direct influence.

Eighteenth-century taste was probably at its most elegant

### *The Changing Face of England*

after 1760, but there was yet something very gracious in the most cultured society. The letters of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, to her favourite grandchild, Diana, Duchess of Bedford, are succinct, like the lady herself hasty and impassioned, but in their information, common sense, acute judgment and veneer of culture they disclose the sentiment of the age. Such is the impression that many a letter and diary leave behind them. Manners were stilted and yet possessed knightly charm. There was a great deal of excellent conversation, at its most serious, reasonable, intelligent and philosophical, and even at the lower levels salted with wit. Such a society, even if its expensive brocades and satins were only used occasionally, had its undoubted attractions.

But there is a reverse side to the picture. This very society which appears at one moment so civilised will be found to be guilty of boorish practical jokes, bawdy conversations, brutal behaviour and indelicate taste. There were some who kept themselves unspotted from the crudities of fashionable society but, even more than now, there was something sluttish behind the social graces and the courtly bow. Lust and drunkenness, greed and indelicacy were equally at home in the stately homes of England as in Hogarth's Gin Alley. No moral judgment is involved in this statement. Plentiful evidence, much of it extremely unpleasant and sordid, abounds to prove the truth. The attractions of life in eighteenth-century England must be contrasted with the squalor and brutality which characterised a nobleman's household as well as some insanitary country cottage.

London had always been the leading city in the country, its population surpassing that of every other town by a wide margin. In the eighteenth century the city expanded in area, if not greatly in population, and architecturally the widening of its circumference formed the leading theme of its history. Many building schemes were started to provide for this exodus towards the west. The first move, the planning of George Street, and Hanover Square, had a distinctly Whig complexion for most of the tenants were Whig generals. On the other hand,

### *Changes in London*

the development of the Cavendish-Harley estate was a Tory project, planned by a Tory architect, James Gibbs, and largely tenanted by Tories. Simultaneously the artistic Lord Burlington was extending his property behind Piccadilly. The widening of London's residential area was also marked by the building of new churches which were intended to cope with population changes, and to celebrate the Tory victory towards the end of Anne's reign. Other architectural signs of the city's growing importance might well include the rather stolid Mansion House, the Horse Guards and, most significant of all, Westminster Bridge, the first bridge to be constructed across the Thames since London Bridge had been built in the Middle Ages, it took twelve years to build and cost nearly £400,000.

But if London was expanding, the population remained static,<sup>1</sup> for relevant statistics suggest that the death-rate, caused by the congested and insanitary conditions in which London's poor lived, was higher here than anywhere else in the kingdom. It is probable that there might have been some decrease in the population if a constant stream of immigrants had not acted as a counterpoise to any possible decline. Apart from the continuous exodus from the country, two classes of immigrants demand attention. The number of Irish, who were principally employed in London as weavers or unskilled labourers, greatly increased as the century advanced. Their poverty, indiscipline and inconceivably low standard of living made them unpopular. The Jews formed another equally unpopular set of immigrants. Some of them were educated, cultured men, experts at banking like Sampson Gideon who helped to finance the Seven Years' War, and who played a prominent part in City life. But there were others, poorer, more grasping, who, excluded from industrial occupations, took, the more subtle, to money lending and the less intelligent to peddling and street trading.

In general this London of 1760 was moving towards a more civilised period in its history, emerging from what had only too clearly been a disorderly and dirty past. Dr. Johnson, writing

<sup>1</sup> Available figures suggest *c.* 1700, 674,500, 1760, 676,750.

### *The Changing Face of England*

of London four years after his own arrival in the town which he loved so well (1741), described it as a 'city famous for wealth, commerce and plenty, and for every kind of civility and politeness, but abounds with such heaps of filth, as a savage would look on with amazement' Various factors, which tended to vanish as the century advanced, account for this impression. The comparative insecurity of the streets, especially at night, was caused by the large number of footpads and ruffians as well as by gangs of drunken young men, sometimes of good birth, who were able to disappear beyond the law into the cavernous streets of ill-repute around Whitechapel and Bethnal Green. The excessive consumption of spirits, as Hogarth's satirical picture suggests, was another contributory factor in lowering the standard of life. 'Nor is there,' it was said in 1721, 'any part of this town wherein the number of alehouses, brandy and Geneva shops doth not daily increase.' Whether every tenth shop was, as it was commonly asserted, a gin shop, the detrimental effects of gin on the health and moral well-being of the people were evident. Competent experts insist that it was the chief cause of the very high death-rate which was characteristic of London, as the bills of mortality reveal.<sup>1</sup> In the first half of the century London life was gloomy, rough and brutal; traitors' heads still topped Temple Bar, a sign of the violence and poverty that permeated all but the newest and noblest parts of the city.

Yet the city's manners and morals had improved by 1760. Even the gin trade began to lose its death-like grip after the bill of 1751. Although public health did not greatly improve until the latter half of the century, the foundation of many London hospitals, the Westminster (1719), Guy's (1723), St. George's (1734), the London (1740), and the Middlesex (1745), as well as separate institutions for the treatment of small-pox and mental maladies, reflect the growing interest taken in medical science. Equally important, some of the more obvious ideas

<sup>1</sup> Comparative figures of estimated death-rate in London are. 1700, 1:25; 1750, 1:21; 1797, 1:35; 1801-11, 1:38, 1821, 1:40.

### *Eighteenth-Century London*

about hygiene, like the need for proper ventilation, were beginning to percolate through the different classes of society. If actual improvement was only slight, it is probable that the London of 1760 was healthier and cleaner than it had been at the beginning of the century. It was also much more orderly since the administrative reforms, which were in the course of time to improve the administration of justice and the maintenance of law and order, were just beginning to see the light.

Violent and dirty as London would appear to a modern Englishman, it remained one of the most attractive and interesting of cities. It was the hub of the commercial universe. It was already possible to describe the busy appearance of the Thames in glowing terms: 'the whole surface of the Thames,' wrote an observer later in the century, 'is covered with small vessels, barges, boats, and wherries, passing to and fro, and below the three bridges,<sup>1</sup> such a prodigious forest of masts, for miles together, that you would think all the ships of the universe were here assembled.' Its industries tended to decrease in importance, but there could be no question of its pre-eminence as a financial and commercial centre. The London Exchange was the centre of a whirl of company promotion, speculation, investment and business consultation. The continued importance of the Bank of England, which became a national institution in this period, was yet another sign of London's financial supremacy. Under the guidance, from 1695 to 1724, of the Secretary of the Treasury, William Lowndes, the Bank prospered and became closely associated in the ensuing period with many of the major business concerns in the City, including the East India and South Sea Companies. The Bank's notes were principally used by Londoners but, writes its historian, 'evidence also suggests that before the general rise of county banks and the extensive issue of country banknotes, before 1760, the Bank of England note had a more extensive circulation than it enjoyed during the later period.' In a less specialised and more general way the London shops

<sup>1</sup> London Bridge; Westminster Bridge (1738-50), Blackfriars Bridge (1760-69).



### *The Changing Face of England*

already excelled; 'the magnificence of the shops,' said a foreign visitor, Archenholtz, at a slightly later date, 'is the most striking thing in London; they sometimes extend without interruption for an English mile. The shop front has large glass windows and a glass door. In these the merchant displays all that is finest and most modern.'

Against this bustling, busy background, a strange compound of riches and poverty, fashion and courtly amusement must be placed. Every gentleman of distinction had a town house. It would not be a splendid palace or hôtel such as his French contemporaries inhabited in Paris. In appearance it would be modest and well-proportioned, little different from the houses of the London merchants, elegant in its appointments, generally (though the society of the age had little time for what moderns call 'cosiness') moderately comfortable. The little world of high society which, in English fashion, often somewhat patronisingly embraced politicians, bankers, writers and even some professional men, spent much of its time in amusement. And in this, as in all other respects (but Bath in its heyday affords an excellent comparison) London remained supreme.

London had an infinite variety of attractions to offer. If one did not wish to see the animals at the Tower of London or to take tea with the lunatics at Bedlam, it would be possible to visit the Haymarket Theatre, built in 1720, or the Covent Garden Opera House, opened in 1733. At the Theatre opposite the Haymarket, Handel and J. J. Heidegger fought their battle against the rival composers patronised by Frederick, Prince of Wales. There were some dismal failures here, Chesterfield wittily described how he had attended the opera, but 'finding the King and Queen there alone had come away, assuming that they had gone there to talk business.' But it was here that Handel was making musical history; in 1731, as the presentation of Biblical subjects on the stage was illegal, Handel produced his play, *Esther*, as an oratorio.

Many of London's amusements were more informal. The coffee-house and the club catered for all classes. But this did

### *The Coffee-House*

not mean that the tavern lost any of its age-old popularity, for as the age was one of marked sociability and conviviality more people made use of it and stayed longer than in earlier times. The tavern was the ordinary man's club, some providing their habitués with rough sports like duck-hunting, dog-fighting and badger-baiting. 'It was the custom at this time, as it had long been, for almost every man who had the means to spend his evenings at some public-house or tavern or other place of public entertainment.'

The coffee-house dated from the previous century. Its primary function was to serve as a centre for reading the newspapers, taking refreshment, having a smoke in the long churchwarden pipes that were still the fashion, or meeting business associates. But more and more, members of the different professions came together at certain coffee-houses which assumed something of the characteristics of a modern club. In this way, Garraway's and Lloyd's were patronised by merchants, the Chapter off Paternoster Row by booksellers, Batson's by doctors, while men of fashion drank coffee at houses in St James's Street, at White's Chocolate House or the Cocoa Tree or Brooks's.

The evolution of the coffee-house into the club must be associated with a recreation from which no class was immune, gambling. Card games: brag, picquet, quadrille, loo, whist (especially in the 1740s) afforded the greatest opportunity for quick gains and equally rapid losses. Men and women of high society, the young buck and the elderly dowager, were equally ready to take a bet on any and every conceivable chance. 'Because Beau Nash had bet that he could, a man ran himself to death to make the journey from Bath to London and back within a specified time; whereupon Nash took up a collection at the Rooms for the benefit of the widow.' The money lost and won in a single day or night at one of the fashionable clubs reached prodigious proportions. 'Lord Stavordale, not one-and-twenty, lost eleven thousand there [at Almack's] last Tuesday, but recovered it by one great hand at hazard; he swore a great oath: "Now, if I had been playing *deep*, I might have won millions."'

### *The Changing Face of England*

It was possibly the gambling involved in horse-racing and commercial speculation that led to the growing popularity of both.

But there were less harmful occupations. The citizen of London could promenade through London's open spaces, down Pall Mall or through St. James's Park (replanned by 'Capability Brown,' the landscape gardener, between 1770 and 1771). The fashionable world preferred Kensington Gardens, whose replanning and expansion Queen Caroline had entrusted between 1730 and 1735 to Bridgeman and Kent, and from which the common herd was excluded. But the latter had their amusements, the Lord Mayor's Procession, or most satisfying as well as unpleasant spectacle of all, 'hanging day' at Tyburn.

London was pre-eminent in practically every form of human activity, virtue and vice, but it did not dominate. Life in the provincial towns, still imbedded deeply in the surrounding country, afforded a pale reflection of society in the capital, and yet retained its own individuality and special characteristics. There was obviously a great difference between towns, the social life of a clothing town like Leeds or Bradford would vary greatly from that of a fashionable spa like Tunbridge Wells or a watering place like Scarborough. But, taking this difference in locality and significance into effect, the type of town to be found in early eighteenth-century England only varied in non-essentials. Perhaps the most representative example was a cathedral town which might support some industry, probably wool or cloth, and be a market for the wares of the surrounding neighbourhood. Each layer of society worked and amused itself in ways that were similar to those of the capital, if less grandiose and sophisticated. Town government was often corrupt and inefficient, but moves were made, through independent commissioners, towards a better system of paving, lighting, cleaning and policing the town. High society amused itself by gambling, card playing and dancing. More popular with the masses were the public entertainments, theatre shows (the Nottingham Theatre was established in 1760; the Theatre Royal, Manchester, in 1775) and horse races which formed the focal-point of the recreative life of many provincials.

### *The Growth of Bath*

Eleven years after George III became King, Nottingham played Sheffield at cricket, an augury of a new, and usually humane, form of recreation. Thus in work and play England's provincial towns were sustained by their own vitality, generally prosperous and busy, and all in all very far from dull in their society. If Johnson could say that 'when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life,' there were thousands who would have taken umbrage at the implied insult to their native town.

There was one class of town which stood, socially, by itself, the spa town of which Bath was the finely-built queen. Bath was an old town, but the houses that huddled beneath the fifteenth-century stone Abbey had few pretensions to beauty when Queen Anne made her visit in 1702. By 1800 Bath was transformed and was what it still remains, the most perfect representation of an age. This may in part have been a result of its excellent springs, where so many ladies and gentlemen, afflicted with the chronic gout induced by the constant consumption of port wine, sought relief. Bath's growth was the work of four men. Ralph Allen, the two John Woods and Beau Nash. Allen, the son of a Cornish innkeeper, established a cross-country postal service that brought him a fortune. He settled in Bath, built the lovely Prior Place and made friends with the great Chatham, Pope, Fielding, Bishop Warburton and others. The quarry which he exploited at Combe Down, a few miles away, provided the Bath stone with which the two architects, John Wood, father and son, constructed the terraces and crescents which graced the city<sup>1</sup>. But Nash was the *genius loci*. Welsh by birth, gambler and speculator by business, always dressed in the height of fashion, he laid down the rules which made the spa. He insisted that gallants should remove their swords to prevent unseemly quarrels, and made 'the country bumpkins . . . discard their top boats and coarse language at the evening assemblies and dances'. His ventures failed in 1745, but the city's council generously and rightly gave

<sup>1</sup> Tablets on the walls to-day commemorate many famous residents. Some have fallen from grace. The writer noticed that a house where the Earl of Chesterfield once lived had a notice to the effect that 'respectable lodgers *only*' were taken. How his lordship would have laughed!

### *The Changing Face of England*

him a small pension, and a public funeral at his death in 1761. Life at Bath was sociable, gracious and interesting.

The pump-room and the theatre, the hotels and villas of Bath were unrivalled, but other towns were already beginning to claim similar attention. Cheltenham, Harrogate and Tunbridge Wells were soon frequented by high society in search of health and amusement. One other town demands attention as a forerunner of things to come, Scarborough. The old Duchess of Marlborough, writing from Scarborough in August, 1732, commented: 'I saw the Duchess of Manchester [one of her grand-daughters] this morning, who is very well. She goes into the sea and drinks the waters every day' The rising fashion of bathing in the sea, which established Scarborough's reputation, was to spread slowly towards other centres on Britain's coast. Chesterfield commented on the habit by saying that rumour suggested that the government was thinking of increasing the revenue through the imposition of a tax on bathers to be graduated in proportion to the amount of water each displaced. The eighteenth century saw the dawn of the holiday resort as well as the heyday of the health spa.

But the countryside was the real England. The small village community with its threefold centre—church, manor house and local inn—was the essential unit in English society. Class-distinctions meant far less in the village than in the town, for while there were few who could actually step outside the social grading, there were many who were bound together by the same interests. The local squire was as much interested as his tenant and labourer in farming, in sowing and harvesting, in breeding cattle, in the activities of the local market. Even the parson, as Woodforde's delightful diary records, would help with the harvest or farm his own glebe. And the leading English amusements breathed the clear air and green grass of the countryside. Horse-racing was extremely popular and yet so haphazardly carried out that the meetings took place on the local common to which the whole neighbourhood had open access. Hunting in this period normally meant the hunting of the hare, there were innumerable

## *Sports*

packs of harriers, since stag-hunting, except on Exmoor and a few other areas, tended to decline in popularity, while fox-hunting was, with some exceptions, confined to the north of England. But there was a great increase in fox-hunting in the latter half of the century. The other amusements of the countryman were rough and ready, sometimes cruel and often unrelated to any accepted set of rules. The ancient game of football did not resemble the modern game. Cock-fighting was brutal but democratic, since men and women of all classes followed it with fantastic enthusiasm, wagering sums from a thousand guineas downwards on some spurred champion. Boxing was more and more popular but extremely unscientific, even after Jack Broughton framed his set of rules in 1743. Ironically, Broughton, whose patron was the Duke of Cumberland, lost both his eyes in a boxing match in 1750. But it is impossible to define the life of the countryside by a mere list of its activities. The quintessence of English rural life was, and even in the days of the petrol station and aeroplane continues to be, found in the blend of different social groups within an harmonious union. Practically isolated from the outer world by the poorness of communications, the country village in the eighteenth century represented, even if the sombre side of its life is recognised, something essentially English in its quality and atmosphere.

And yet the historian is forced to close his picture of society on a gloomy note. Little progress had been made in medicine despite the newly-founded hospitals and the introduction of inoculation against smallpox. Men and women were afflicted by diseases and sores of all kinds, to which the evil state of sanitation must have contributed. And, as if this were not enough, manners were still brutal and crime frequent. The brutality of the age was reflected in many of its pastimes as well as in the prevalence of violence and misery. Cock-throwing, goose-riding, bull-baiting, and badger-baiting were all popular and all equally cruel. 'He,' says a contemporary of the local squire, 'spends that part of the day in which he is not on horse-back, at table in smoking and getting drunk . . . he is naturally a very dull animal.' Heavy

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drinking was a vice common to all classes and the father, and grandfather, of many evils, including the gout, which made the lives of many statesmen intolerable. Drunkenness was so customary that etiquette demanded, very foolishly, that the visiting servant should be made as drunk as his master. The evils of gin have been mentioned. What gin was to the lower classes, port was to society. Horace Walpole, writing in 1741, informs us that 'Lincoln, Lord Holderness, Lord Robert Sutton, young Churchill and a dozen more, grew jolly, stayed till seven in the morning and drank thirty-two bottles.'

It is against this background of strong drink and violence, odorous sanitation, poor health and even more unpleasing vices that crime and poverty established themselves. The prevalence of crime is not astonishing when the policing of the great cities was so amateurish and inadequate. It is hardly surprising that the penal code was, in the words of the great Irish historian, W. E. Lecky, 'a mere, sanguinary chaos.' The law as it stood was often inconsistent as well as severe; 'to steal fruit ready gathered was a felony; to gather the fruit and steal it was only a trespass. If you were seen stealing goods from a shop, you could be transported, but if you stole them without being seen, you could be hanged.' Such folly afforded good evidence for the growing belief, which incidentally made juries unwilling to convict men for trivial crimes that might lead to the death sentence, that the law was in need of radical reform. As punishment was always punitive rather than remedial, the state of the prisons was often appalling, filthy, inefficient, full of lice and disease, the homes of the typhus or gaol fever that spread through the country. In 1750 the officials at the Old Bailey caught the fever from a batch of prisoners with the result that four out of the six judges sitting on the Bench as well as forty minor officials died. It was afterwards decided that prisoners from Newgate should be disinfected with vinegar before they were brought to the dock. But no real attempt was made to remedy the obvious deficiencies of justice, with one exception. This was Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, which ordered the calling of banns to stop the

## Poverty

scandalous 'Fleet' marriages that had lured so many women to their doom.

Poverty was often crime's close associate, for the criminal was more often than not in his early stages the victim of, rather than the exploiter of, society. Wages in the first half of the century were moderately high, but by modern standards they were none the less execrable. Nor is it surprising that there was often a short cut from honest labour—a labour that was not infrequently seasonal and therefore punctuated by long periods of unemployment—to the debtor's prison, Marshalsea, Fleet or King's Bench, crime and prostitution. The abominable custom, which persisted in some trades, of paying the weekly wages in the local tavern late on Saturday evening was bound to have the worst possible effects. Already half-drunk, the labourer might tiddle his wages away, to the profit of the publican, and come home penniless to a naturally irate wife and hungry family. The picture must not be overdrawn, but there was a very real gulf fixed between the poor and the rich, between Southampton House in Bloomsbury and the twopenny lodgings which housed thousands of London's workers.

The Poor Law did not assist, as it was rapidly growing unworkable.<sup>1</sup> The provisions of the paternal Tudor government of 1601, which had made every parish liable for the relief of its own poor, formed the basis of government policy towards poor relief. Two further acts had modified and confirmed its stipulations, the Settlement Act (1662) which permitted the parish to return vagrants to their place of birth, and an Act of 1723 which allowed parishes to group themselves together for the purpose of building a workhouse. But neither of these acts touched the root of a problem of increasing perplexity, embracing all the poor from the vagrant children to the impotent and the aged. In the first place the question of vagrancy, and of the parish apprentices in particular, was often horribly mismanaged by the authorities responsible for dealing with it. The Act of 1723 allowed the

<sup>1</sup> There is interesting information about this and other parochial matters in W. E. Tate, *The Parish Chest* (1946).



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parish authorities to 'farm out' the apprentices on public and private works, thus confirming a system that had, in relation to factories at a later date, the most horrid repercussions on the poor children involved. Apart from the inadequacy and frequent corruption of the overseers of the poor, there was a general absence of direction which, as the poor rate gradually mounted, obviously led towards disaster.

There were, nevertheless, men and women working away from the old methods towards new ideas, thinking out new schemes and propagating new enthusiasm. For if there was much brutality, there was also a surprising amount of humanity and active benevolence. Improvements in medicine, in the administration of justice and the conduct of life in the great cities must be coupled with the amazing number of philanthropic societies and the amount of money contributed towards beneficent objects throughout the eighteenth century. More striking still, these schemes found financial and other backing among the leaders of society who might well have been thought to have been enclosed within the selfish ring of their existence. Nearly every problem had its enlightened advocate, none more enlightened than Jonas Hanway, whose activities form an admirable commentary on the humanitarianism of the age in which he lived. Hanway, who has achieved fame as the first Englishman to carry a waterproof umbrella, was born in 1712 and, after retiring from the service of the Russia Company, devoted his life to improving the lot of his fellows. He was especially concerned with the heavy infant mortality, more particularly among the foundlings and parish apprentices, and played a prominent part in helping Captain Coram to establish his celebrated Foundling Hospital. Later, as a result of investigations into the appalling conditions which prevailed in some workhouses, he persuaded Parliament to pass two acts, one providing for a register of all infants admitted to the workhouse, and the other reducing the years of apprenticeship. Other projects with which Hanway was closely associated included the Marine Society, founded in 1756, which 'had clothed fourteen thousand and six hundred men for the Navy in time of war . . .

### *Literature and Culture*

had established twelve thousand boys in a profession where they could earn an honest livelihood, removed from the temptations to crime arising from dire poverty,' and the Magdalen Hospital for repentant prostitutes. Hanway died in 1786 after a very useful life. He was a very ordinary man, but happily he was a representative character, one of the number of Howards, Corams and Oglethorpes who were gradually improving society. Thus, by 1760, the country really stood at the opening of a new era in its social life, albeit one which was for long to have as much shadow as light.

### *6. Literature and Culture*

If there was sweetness and light in the story of the country's cultural development, it was mainly the result of efforts that were amateur and individual rather than institutional or professional. Individualistic culture might be, democratic it was not. Hogarth alone seems to approach towards the 'vulgar' level. The great writers, painters and craftsmen of the age were generally patronised and paid by the aristocracy. Culture, in fact, was a monopoly of a small class. This often meant that the ideas which it expressed were as polished and urbane as those of the class which, to put it crudely, paid for it. Certainly, a Smollett could depict life on the lower deck, but he was describing something that resulted from his own experience, not writing at what may be called the 'popular' level. The rebels against convention, the Shelleys and Byrons of the later period, were either rich enough to live without it or perished in the struggle. It would nevertheless be wrong to insist that eighteenth-century literature was purely conditioned by the social structure of the age. The poet could easily escape outside the conventions of society through a genuine appreciation of natural beauty or in tribute to the fundamental ideas of human morality, or in occasional satire or in lyrical song. This is indeed what makes the eighteenth century so significant in literary history, for however much it was

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involved in a social pattern, it was yet striving inevitably towards new forms and new ideas.

Neither the universities nor the schools contributed much to this. Both Oxford and Cambridge were steeped in lethargic complacency grounded on their past reputation. College dons were usually port-drinking classics who, if they married, retired to college livings or otherwise died as they had lived, Fellows of Trinity or Students of Christ Church, often eccentric, sometimes ill-mannered, not seldom engaged in cantankerous wranglings over matters of no conceivable importance to life or scholarship. The great writers of the age, with the notable exception of Richard Bentley,<sup>1</sup> the Master of Trinity, Cambridge, rarely drew their inspiration either from the lovely courts or from the sterile scholarship of the universities. Nor can much more be said of Britain's schools. They were perhaps less wreathed in apparent somnolence, but the pedagogue's life was a weary one, punctuated by classics, chapel and caning. The schools lacked, however, the deadly systematisation of routine that has since affected the framework of English education. There were probably more who appreciated the friendly brutality of Eton than those who, like the elder Pitt, suffered from its insensibility to matters personal, spiritual and intellectual. The grammar schools might have been worse; they could certainly have been much better. But there is one further remark that might well be made in extenuation of this system of education. The late A. E. Housman, a classical scholar of great critical ability, described the period from 1691 to 1825 as 'our great age of scholarship.' Apart from Bentley, who was equally distinguished in both Latin and Greek, there were many names—Markland, Dawes, John Taylor, Toop, Tyrwhitt, Musgrave and, later, Porson—to show that Greek scholarship was not neglected. At least a greater percentage of educated men showed real acquaintance with the classics than they do now, and this in turn informed and awakened their minds. Thus while there is no question as to the apparent

<sup>1</sup> And Bentley spent most of his Mastership at war with his College and University.

### *The Beginnings of the Novel*

somnolence of English education in the reigns of the first two Georges, it should be remembered that it ingrained a classical background, well suited to an age of culture and taste.

True as it was that the classical background influenced taste and made for literary discrimination, it was in spite of rather than because of the education through which he had passed that the eighteenth-century gentleman was ready to appreciate the things of the mind. The special characteristics of contemporary literature to some degree reflect the mind and atmosphere of the century marvellously well. Historically, they bear witness to the evolution of a distinct literary form. Socially they reflect contemporary customs and conventions in a vividly accurate way.

The beginnings of the novel, with which the leisured classes were now able to beguile their days, lay well back in past history, but it was under the Georges that it came to maturity. Daniel Defoe, Dissenter, journalist and political pamphleteer, created in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) a work of fiction that became immediately popular. More than any of the succeeding novels of the period, it retained its appeal, less by its skill than by its veracity. Samuel Richardson's novels suffer from an ineffaceable liking for moralisation, typical of the age, but that could not subdue his creative genius. *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), followed by *Clarissa* (1747-1748) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-1754), were immediate successes, for they combined sensibility and romance within the framework of contemporary society. They were to some extent the earliest works of fiction to appeal to the emotion and, as modern cinema audiences would confirm, satisfaction is sometimes found in tears. Fielding was a man of different type, progressive, humanitarian and less narrow than the master-printer, Richardson. His novels—*Joseph Andrews* (1742), famous, if for nothing else, for its life-like portrait of Parson Adams, *Jonathan Wild* (1743), *Tom Jones* (1749) and *Amelia* (1751)—were remarkable for their feeling and vitality as well as for the excellence of their character-drawing, their plots possess greater artistic unity than those of Richardson's novels. The year 1748, that marked the end of the War of the Austrian

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Succession, saw the appearance of the *Adventures of Roderick Random*, the work of a former naval surgeon, Tobias Smollett. In this book, Smollett returned to the earlier, 'picaresque' type of novel, which has little central plot but consists of a series of episodes, adventure, travel and roguery, bound together by a general theme. But *Roderick Random* was also full of brilliant characterisation. Some of Smollett's later works retained its crudities and violence but, except possibly for *Peregrine Pickle* (1751), they lacked the hall-mark of inspiration. Smollett's last book, *Humphrey Clinker* (1771), written at Livorno in Italy where he had gone in search of better health, is less rancorous and makes more pleasant reading.

The last great novelist of early Georgian England nearly falls outside the provenance of the period, for Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* first began to be published in 1760. The author was a cadaverous, consumptive and cynical cleric, vicar, first, through the good-will of his uncle, of the charmingly-named Sutton-on-the-Forest and later of Coxwold, but it is difficult to feel that he had any real vocation to the ministry. *Tristram Shandy* and the later *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) were masterpieces of improvisation and feeling. Humour, beauty, sentiment and character were essential characteristics of the work, personified, perhaps, in the immortal Walter Shandy, Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim. Sterne's triumph was immediate. Lionised, ever touched by his passion for the fair, feverish in search of health, his candle of life guttered towards its close. Genius flowers in curious ways. The parson became the creator of a great novel and the chronicler of feeling.

Feeling, sentiment, sensibility, call it what you will, played an important part in English literature, but it might at first sight appear to be lacking from the work of the greatest poet of the first half of the century, Alexander Pope. Pope was born in 1688 and died in 1744. He was a Roman Catholic, a master of satire and one of the literary exponents of Bolingbroke's new-found 'Toryism'. His poetry has a limited appeal because it so essentially reflects the spirit of the age in which he lived. Polished,

*Pope, Gray and Swift*

urbane, elegant and exact, the poet's unquestioned mastery appears in his translations of *Homer*, in the *Rape of the Lock*, the *Dunciad*, the *Essay on Criticism*, the *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot* and the *Essay on Man*. Few men have been able to express the truth in verse in so vitriolic a way, his well-known lines on Queen Caroline's Chamberlain, Lord Hervey, are envenomed.

Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,  
This painted child of dirt that stinks and stings,  
Fop at the toilet, flatterer at the board,  
Now trips a lady, and now trutts a lord,  
Beauty that shocks you, parts that none can trust,  
Wit that can creep and pride that licks the dust.

No one can urge that Pope's poetry is lyrical. And for this reason, it is sometimes asserted that his verse is artificial and mechanical. This is just what it is not. Finding the seventeenth-century metaphysical poets unbearably tedious and unreal, he sought to recover poetic health and intellectual clarity in the charm and romance of the classics. If Pope is to be called classical, intellectual, even stilted, he still remains the herald of the new age of romance—and sensibility, of the return to naturalism and classical simplicity.

Pope was not necessarily opposed to either of his two contemporaries, James Thomson (1700–1748) or Thomas Gray (1716–1771), whose poetic abilities took rather a different turn. Thomson's *Seasons* (1730) marked the turning away from urbane sophistication towards a genuine appreciation of natural beauty. Gray's poetry marks a further step in the evolution towards naturalism, since his work combines appreciation of the romantic and scenic elements in life and nature with a classical restraint. He had gone from Eton to Cambridge, of which University he later became a highly-ineffective Professor of Modern History. The total of his surviving work, including the famous *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, is slight but singularly precious.

The figure of Jonathan Swift, Dean of St Patrick's, Dublin, who died bedridden and insane in 1745, might seem to belong to the age of Anne, but his famous *Gulliver's Travels* date from

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1720. In spite of the attention he has received, he remains an enigmatic figure in history and literature. His fierce satire struck a bitter note, especially when he compared mankind with the wise horses, the Houyhnhnms. The most likely view of Swift is that he seems to have loved men and women as individuals but to have loathed them as 'humanity.' His style is perfectly plain and sanely balanced; in intellectual energy and sheer brilliance of invention he had few equals.

### *7. Music, Painting and Architecture*

The craftsmanship of an age is a register of its taste as well as a reflection of its social and political history, for the form of an art, whether it is music, painting or architecture, influenced as it may be by the conventions of society or the political party in power, obviously represents the degree of appreciation of those who cultivate and patronise it. Thus, just as the conventions of society tended to be at their best reasonable, precise and not wanting in elegance, so too were the first half of the century's buildings, its pictures and its music. Politically, we are within the period of the Whig Supremacy. Thus Gibbs, suspected as a Roman Catholic and a Jacobite, was superseded (if but temporarily) as the government's architect in 1716 by the Whig Hawksmoor. In music, Handel worked under the patronage of George I and II, but even he lost this temporarily when he had the impertinence to compose a wedding anthem for the marriage of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and was only fully restored to favour after the composition of the *Te Deum* to commemorate the victory of Dettingen (1743), where George II had himself fought. Throughout the period, art depended on the patronage of the wealthy classes; the greater the flow of money the more it flourished.

But there was a saving grace, lacking in the Victorian epoch, in the discrimination and taste of the period. There was no age in which native craftsmanship, whether it was in the intricate

### *Music and Painting*

gilding or delicate panelling of a state coach (*cf.* the panels on the state coach designed by Cipriani for George III in 1762), in pottery, sculpture, decorative iron-work or furniture, was so appreciated. Thomas Chippendale (d. 1779) started his business as a furniture-maker in Long Acre at the beginning of George II's reign, and began the tradition later finely represented by Hepplewhite and Sheraton. The ordinary Englishman of the time seems to have had an instinctive refinement of taste which made him appreciate beautiful things. Thus, although the actual evolution of painting, music and architecture was fashioned by royal and aristocratic patronage, its quality was determined by the more elusive standard of fine taste.

English music was dominated by a German who became a naturalised Englishman in 1726: George Frederick Handel. No natural-born Englishman, with the exception of Thomas Arne, who composed *Rule Britannia*—and arranged *God Save the King* for Drury Lane—and some rather more felicitous songs, can compete with Handel in his mastery. Coming to England in 1710, he was patronised by both Georges; he died blind in 1759. Much of his music is therefore associated with royal occasions: the *Water Music*, for a river fête in 1717, the coronation anthem, *Zadok the Priest*, for George II's coronation in 1727; the *Fireworks Music*, to celebrate the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. His greatest triumph, the *Messiah*, was first performed in Ireland in 1741, and had to wait some years before it was fully appreciated in England. It falls outside the competence of this work to deal with Handel's music in detail or to assess his ability as a musician, but the crowd that attended his burial in Westminster Abbey gives a clear estimate of his importance. None of his English contemporaries compared with him. Nevertheless, the passion for amateur music, and the appreciation of musical entertainment tended to attract more attention as the period advanced.

Painting, as one might expect, was dominated by portraiture, by the tradition that had been inaugurated by Sir Godfrey Kneller who died in 1723 after being court painter to every king since James II. The portrait painters' performance was often



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second-rate as truth was sacrificed to social vanity. But there was one exception, Hogarth. Hogarth, who first set up in business in London as an engraver of coats of arms in 1720, cut loose from the insincerity of contemporary artists. Instead of painting noble lords or charming ladies, he took his subjects from the everyday life of contemporary, crowded London: alive, cruel, satirical and realistic. The moral purpose that shaped his choice of subject matter did not deflect from his extraordinarily fine qualities as an artist.

The social ideas, the politics and presuppositions of an age are reflected in the houses in which people live and the churches in which they worship. The division of society in the Middle Ages, into labourers living in wattled hovels that hardly survived the passing storm, a powerful baronial class who lived in castles whose rugged keeps still endure, and a privileged class of bishops and priests whose churches and cathedrals portray with tapering elegance basic religious truth and social stability, can thus be represented through the study of medieval building. This is equally true of the Georgian and Victorian eras.

Eighteenth-century architecture had a unity, a continuous theme running through its buildings which interprets the classic harmony and rationalism of the age admirably. It was not an age of church building, but those churches that date from the early years of the century, more especially St Mary-le-Strand, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields and All Saints', Derby, portray the essential content of eighteenth-century religion, its reasonableness and lack of enthusiasm. Similarly, the houses of the great are so full of grandeur that comfort is absorbed in spaciousness and pomp. More successful socially were the town houses of upper middle-class society and the country houses of the local squires, which often combined comfort with distinction.<sup>1</sup>

Inheriting from Sir Christopher Wren, who died in 1723, a tradition that perhaps marked the climax in British building, his successors modified or expanded the characteristic features of

<sup>1</sup> Something of this can be seen in some of the illustrations in Volume I of *Recording Britain* (1946).

### *Architecture*

his style without losing sight of the original model until the turn of the century. All Wren's best work had been done before the period opened, but his three exemplars, Vanbrugh, Hawksmoor and Gibbs, lived on to grace the England of the first two Georges with noble buildings of exact and harmonious proportions. Sir John Vanbrugh, who died in 1726, turned with astonishing facility from the writing of plays to the building of great houses. Castle Howard in Yorkshire for the Earl of Carlisle; Blenheim at Woodstock, Oxfordshire, for the Duke of Marlborough; and Seaton Delaval, on the Northumbrian coast, for the 'mad' Delavals. His houses are masterly and palatial. Their range of vision is immense and yet they are perfectly knit together by corridors of naked stone and finely proportioned windows; their other features include lofty interiors, Ionic colonnades and a surround of trees and water dotted with temples and bridges. The genius of Vanbrugh found its perfect embodiment in the vast and grandiose, yet perfectly mannered, houses of the very great. They lacked comfort and homeliness (Eastbury in Dorset, built for Bubb Dodington, the perfect sycophant, 'was blown-up by gunpowder after £200 a year had been offered to anyone who could live there, and there were no replies'), but they were truly magnificent.

Hawksmoor, who worked with both Wren and Vanbrugh, and Gibbs, another friend of Wren's, were perhaps more successful than Vanbrugh because their work was less grand and therefore tended to be nearer to technical perfection. Hawksmoor, who exemplified the Baroque, combined the best features of Wren and Vanbrugh. His City churches, each 'an essay in solid geometry' the library of Queen's College, Oxford, the Mausoleum at Castle Howard, the 'Gothick' towers of All Souls' College, Oxford, all portray his merits. Gibbs was more influenced by the Italian masters, but the Rococo style which he had learned from them was modified by English tradition and, one may suspect, by his Scottish ancestry. The results were excellent. The Senate House, Cambridge, which he designed, is one of the loveliest buildings in the University. 'We have,' says Sacheverell Sitwell, 'one of the supreme elegancies of the eighteenth

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century, and a building which, for Gibbs, is strangely feminine. The proportion of the Senate House is an unending pleasure; the coupled pilasters at the corners strike such a perfect balance with the engaged columns of the centre. Both the depth of the cornice and balustrade, and the height of the pediment, achieve mathematical or, we would have it, a musical perfection.

With Gibbs, we enter into the splendours of eighteenth-century architecture proper, the 'Palladian' of Kent, the chief protégé of the gifted amateur, the Earl of Burlington. Burlington and his group reacted against the use of the Baroque and the influence of Wren, they tried to fix a standard of architectural taste based on that exhibited by Palladio and Inigo Jones in the last century. They were extremely successful. 'Under George II,' writes John Summerson, 'Palladianism conquered not only the high places of architecture—the great patrons, the government offices—but, through the medium of prints and books, the whole of the vernacular, finding its way ultimately into the workshop of the humblest carpenter and bricklayer.' At its worst, the work of Kent and his followers was, like the exterior of Holkham, heavy and uninteresting, but at its best it was astonishingly versatile and finished. The interior of Holkham, the Coke mansion in Norfolk, for instance, is superb; the mantels, doorways and ceilings have a Roman grandeur that recalls Renaissance art. The Horse Guards is another of Kent's buildings that manages to combine perfection of line and implicit grandeur with self-effacement; Walpole's Houghton contains much of Kent's furniture and interior decoration. He was equally at home in designing a house, decorating the interior or planning the garden. Set amidst a frieze of trees and looking out towards rippled waters and parkland candled with noble oaks and chestnuts the eighteenth-century houses, built or renovated by Kent and his successors, have an elegance representative of culture at its best. Two final illustrations may serve to reinforce this point. The town house of Lady Isabella Finch, No. 44 Berkeley Square, another of his works, is within a small compass remarkably impressive and imaginative. But perhaps the most

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perfect example of Palladian architecture is the bridge in the park at Wilton, near Salisbury, designed by another noble amateur, the Earl of Pembroke. The triple arches, the colonnade joined by a pair of porticoes reflected in the gentle flow of the stream provide a perfect setting, whether for dappled silks and rustling satins or even, more naturalistic still, the elves of an earlier age. Despite its limitations, there was something about the best architecture of the age that compels the statement, *Et ego in Arcadia.*

## CHAPTER X

### THE RELIGIOUS REVOLUTION

#### 1. *The Church of England in the eighteenth century*

The walls of the dining halls of the Oxford and Cambridge colleges are well-graced by portraits of full-blooded, well-fed prelates, their lawnsleeves billowing comfortably and complacently. Such portraits epitomise the Hanoverian Church. They suggest something of the privileged position that Churchmen still held in the country, as well as their inadequate conception of duty. While this age was in some ways irreligious, throughout Europe there were many signs of continued public interest in religion. The sceptics and deists formed only a minority of the intellectual élite, for the most part, churches were well-attended, and public interest in matters appertaining to Christianity and the Church was well sustained and generally sympathetic. To-day, every library of any antiquity contains leather-bound volumes of sermons delivered by famous eighteenth-century divines. The pastoral charges of the bishops often had a circulation running into thousands of copies. Societies for the Reformation of Manners and the Suppression of Vice were assured of support by the higher clergy, nobility and gentry throughout the century. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, founded in 1698, never for one moment relaxed its valuable work and poured forth a stream of pamphlets and literature suited to all types. The village parson was usually a respected member of his small community, often enriching the lives of his parishioners with acts of charity and beneficence. If the Church was somnolent, it was at least alive, and this is a fact not always remembered by those who write about the eighteenth century.

But it is still true that by comparison with Caroline and

### *Bishops and Higher Clergy*

Victorian church life, the Church of England seemed to be marking time without making headway. The principles and purpose of those who held high office in the Church during the period to some extent explain why this should be so. Outwardly, and perhaps inwardly too, for they were sincere men, they reiterated spiritual conventionalities. Bishop Sherlock, writing to Dr Doddridge, a well-known Dissenter, thus commented that 'I have lived long enough to know by experience the truth of what we are taught. That there is none other name by which we may be saved, but the name of Christ only. I have seen the true spirit and comfortable hopes of religion lost in the abundance of speculation and the vain pretences of setting-up natural religion in opposition to revelation, and there will be little hope of a reformation till we are humble enough to be willing to know Christ and Him crucified.' Yet we know that humility was not a natural characteristic of most bishops of the age, or even of Sherlock himself. The learning and erudition of many of these prelates were often great, but they themselves lacked the faith and flame of guidance to give their Christianity the reality of an experience, or to translate it into a faith for the conversion of souls. Their principles and policy were too closely wrapped up with what Bishop Gibson correctly defined as the foundation of the ecclesiastical policy of the higher clergy 'the maintenance of the Protestant Succession, the Church Establishment and the Toleration Act of 1689'. In other words, the Bench of Bishops was so attached to the principles of politics that, whether consciously or not, their purpose was shaped by the secondary objects of the Protestant Succession and the Church Establishment rather than to 'know Christ and to be known of Him'.

Bishops and the higher clergy were not therefore generally sources of inspiration to their listeners. Their rise to the purple often depended on birth or influence, or both. 'No man,' said Dr Johnson in 1775, 'can now be made a bishop for his learning and piety, his only chance of promotion is his being connected with somebody who has parliamentary interest,' a quotation that may be placed side by side with Grenville's remark to the Bishop

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of Bristol that 'he considered bishoprics as of two kinds: bishoprics of business for men of abilities and learning, and bishoprics of ease for men of family and fashion.' A man might rise to high office on his merits, but a period of apprenticeship usually had to be served before friendship with a great man brought the cherished reward. Thus, Gibson was forty-six before he became Bishop of Lincoln and for the next twenty years the government's leading adviser in church matters. Gibson was a good Whig, but his rival, Sherlock, a Tory of equal ability, was fifty before friendship with Queen Caroline brought about his preferment to Bangor. Francis Hare had the good luck to be Walpole's tutor at King's, Cambridge, just as Pretymann superintended the younger Pitt's studies at Pembroke College, Cambridge. In both cases, these happy accidents led to the mitre. On the other hand, a royal chaplaincy, close association with a noble family or political services to the government in power were rather easier modes of approach to high office. The case of the Hon. Frederick Keppel illustrates this point. A royal chaplain and Prebendary of Windsor at twenty-five, he was offered a canonry by Newcastle two years later, but told the Duke that 'he flattered himself his Grace would not expect him to do anything to his disadvantage, which that certainly would be, for by the exchange he would lose £50 a year besides the expense of removing and the chance of livings falling in his gift.' In 1762 he became Bishop of Exeter and shortly afterwards Dean of Windsor as well. In the same way Shute Barrington, brother of Lord Barrington, proceeded rapidly *via* a royal chaplaincy to a canonry at Oxford and two prebendal stalls at Hereford and St Paul's. The aspiring divine missed the deanery of Windsor by a change of government, but was given the bishopric of Llandaff, then Salisbury, and at last the rich see of Durham which he held until his death in 1826. It should be added that, despite the manner of his rise to high office, Barrington proved a good bishop.

The political views of the bishops reflected those of the government which appointed them. Gibson's 'Whiggism' was more pronounced than that of the royal family itself, for he persistently

### *The Political Views of the Bishops*

opposed the rise of the Queen's Tory favourite, Sherlock. Later in the century the government pressed for the appointment of Dr. Beilby Porteus to London, so that he could act as a counter-foil in the House of Lords to the Bishop of Peterborough who had taken a line of his own over the War of American Independence. The government indeed expected active help, not mere acquiescence, in the promotion of its policy, however inconvenient the long journey from a distant diocese and however great the expense of a prolonged stay in London. Newcastle's pained comment on prelatical desertions is typical: 'Can Christian bishops, made and promoted to the highest stations in the Church by me, see such repeated acts of cruelty, uncharitableness and revenge to one who has been their true benefactor, and sit still without publicly declaring against and resenting such measures?' Except in Gibson's early days, the Bench of Bishops was, however, rarely of one political colour, and on purely theological issues was often willing to defy the government. It was this which led to Gibson's breach with Walpole in 1736. Even in political matters, the Bishops did not always toe the line. Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, opposed the government in the full fore-knowledge that 'it is probable that I may continue to be Bishop of Llandaff as long as I live'. He accounted for his promotion to that poorly-paid see succinctly: 'I happened to please a party and they made me a bishop.'

At best these factors diminished the missionary impulse which should stimulate a true 'father in God.' At worst they led to preferment hunting, pluralities, nepotism, non-residence and gross neglect of duty. A letter from the Archbishop of Tuam to the Duke of Newcastle on the death of the Archbishop of Armagh provides a good example of the unseemly haste with which the clergy sought the richer pickings of the Church. 'The death,' he writes, 'of our late primate happening while I was at Tuam, which is near 100 miles from Dublin, I am later than others in my application upon that event, but as the race is not to the swift, especially in cases of this nature, I hope it will not be too late for me to lay my small pretensions (if I may be



### *The Religious Revolution*

permitted to use that expression) before yr. Grace.' Pluralism, partly resulting from the inadequate stipends of some livings, was the besetting sin, with a few notable exceptions, of all the higher clergy. Sherlock was reminded, after he had delivered a sage and telling charge against non-residence, that he had not been averse himself to being Rector of Sherfield when he was Bishop of St. Asaph nor Master of the Temple for upwards of fifty years as well as Dean of Chichester. Hundreds of other illustrations could be given. It followed that far too many charges were left in the hands of curates who were paid barely a living wage. Even some of the bishops neglected their sees. Hoadly never once in six years stepped inside his see of Bangor. Sherlock, a later bishop, found Bangor a pleasant place but confessed what was true of all the poorly paid Welsh sees, that it was no better than a bridge to higher office. Watson, who was Bishop of Llandaff for thirty-four years, retreated to the pleasanter shores of Lake Windermere where he thus described his life's work: 'I have now spent above twenty years in this delightful country but my time has not been spent in field diversions . . . no, it has been spent, partly in supporting the religion and constitution of the country by seasonable publications; and principally in building farm-houses, blasting rocks, enclosing wastes, in making bad land good, in planting larches, and in planting in the hearts of my children principles of piety, benevolence and self-government.' Such admirable occupations were well-suited to a country squire, but whether they embraced the whole duty of the Bishop of Llandaff was another matter. The race indeed may not have been to the swift, but it was undoubtedly to the rich and influential.

The abuses which characterised the higher clergy were mirrored in the ranks of the parish priests. Pluralism and non-residence were the order of the day, in 1809 7,358 clergy out of 11,194 were non-resident. Preferment hunting lowered the stature of the priest throughout the country. But above all there was a vast gulf fixed in politics, stipend, breeding and social distinction between the ordinary country curate and his diocesan. At

### *Clerical Incomes*

the beginning of the period the mass of the country parsons were Tory, their bishops were Whigs, hence the decision of the government to close the Lower House of Convocation when the Tory parsons under the lead of Atterbury sought to condemn the Erastian sermon of a government spokesman, Benjamin Hoadly, then Bishop of Bangor. As the century advanced and the Episcopal Bench became a mosaic of political views, this distinction became less noticeable, but the other differences remained.

Whereas the bishops and better-beneficed clergy, most of whom were pluralists, enjoyed incomes running into four figures, the poorly beneficed parson or the curate had to be content with £30 or £40 a year. The Rev. James Atkinson, Curate of Silverdale for thirty-eight years, never received more than £5 a year while his ecclesiastical superior, the Rector of Warton, had an income of between £700 and £800. In 1830 there were still 1,631 out of 4,254 curates whose stipends averaged less than £60 a year. Nor was there much hope of preferment. Awkward and unpolished, the country curate came last on a long list, often serving his cure diligently and seeking to provide for an ever-growing family. It is hardly surprising that his early enthusiasm often waned, and his inspiration lapsed as his lean horse trudged through the wintry lanes to serve the parish. If the King, George III, could write to Canterbury's Archbishop, Cornwallis, of the 'routs' at Lambeth, that he held 'these levities and vain dissipations as utterly inexpedient, if not unlawful, to pass in a residence for many centuries devoted to divine studies, religious retirement and the extensive exercise of charity and benevolence,' is it surprising that the country parson found solace in hunting rather than in theology, in a pipe of tobacco or a jug of ale rather than in reading the classics?

His talk was now of tithes and dues,  
He smoked his pipe and read the news;  
Knew how to preach old sermons next  
Vamp'd in the preface and the text.  
At Christ'nings well could act his part,  
And had the service all by heart . . .  
Found his head filled with many a system  
But classick authors—he ne'er miss'd them.

### *The Religious Revolution*

The Georgian Church, for all its abuses, was nevertheless less stagnant than some historians have made out. Bereft of evangelical enthusiasm, it had, and maintained, a standard of duty in harmony with its vocation. Its bishops hardly ever lost sight of their final object, even when most immersed in the business of politics. Take, for instance, Bishop Edmund Gibson of London, Walpole's Pope, who acted as the government's adviser in all church matters until 1736. He believed sincerely that Jacobitism was the chief threat to the existence of the Church of England, and therefore made it his object to fill all posts with men of sound, Whig political ideas. But this did not mean that he surrendered the standards of orthodoxy to serve political partisanship. When Lord Chancellor Talbot tried to get his candidate, Thomas Rundle, appointed to the see of Gloucester, Gibson defied the government on the grounds of Rundle's heterodoxy. Nor did it mean that Gibson did not carry out his own duties as a bishop with care and circumspection. He was very conscientious and, as became the country's greatest authority on canon law, precise in his judgments and keen on maintaining the Church's privileges. Another bishop, Joseph Butler of Bristol and, later, of Durham, was an eminent theologian. His *Analogy of Religion* was the most convincing of all attacks on the deistical and sceptical writers of his time. His design in writing this book is described in one of his letters. 'I have made it, sir, my business, ever since I thought myself capable of such sort of reasoning, to prove to myself the beings and attributes of God. And being sensible that it is a matter of the last consequence, I endeavoured after a demonstrative proof; not only more fully to satisfy my own mind but also in order to defend the great truths of natural religion, and those of the Christian revelation, which follow from them against all opposers.' In Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, less personally attractive than either Gibson or Butler, the century had one of the most versatile and profound thinkers, whose book on the *Alliance between Church and State* was one of the most important books that has ever been published on that subject. In George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne (1734-53) in Ireland, the

### *Clerical Diligence*

Church had a philosopher of world-wide fame. Finally, she had in Thomas Wilson, fifty-seven years (1698-1755) Bishop of the poor island see of Sodor and Man, a pastor of great saintliness. Although Wilson's bishopric was the poorest in the kingdom, he refused to accept any other preferment to hold conjointly with it. He upheld a high standard of personal holiness, exercised a strict, even a severe, discipline over his flock, kept a careful watch over candidates for ordination with whom he used to read Greek every day, founded Church schools, set up a free medical service and wrote catechisms to instruct his own people.

Wilson's pastoral zeal was unusual, but evidence suggests that many of the bishops and clergy performed their duties diligently. There were few dioceses in which there was not an annual ordination, even if the bishop's residence in London sometimes obliged the ordination to be performed in a London church. Visitation of the clergy and confirmation of the laity were carried out with fair regularity. Little attention was given to the preparation for confirmation, and the mass character of the laying-on of hands (for which the difficulty of travelling in a vast diocese partly accounts) robbed the ceremony of something of its reverence. The parish clergy were probably more circumspect in their duties than the bishops. Diaries of parish priests which survive, of men as far apart in temperament and ideas as James Woodforde of Ansford and Weston Longueville and John Skinner of Camerton, leave the impression of beneficent pastors caring for their flocks and carrying out their duties as well as they knew how. It would be wrong to judge the standard of achievement by what happens in the parish churches of modern England, the Holy Communion, for instance, was only rarely celebrated. But if few of the clergy were saints like Fletcher of Madely, for the most part, dissenting or orthodox, they performed their duties conscientiously. What they, and indeed all their contemporaries with a few exceptions, lacked was divine enthusiasm.

This complaint cannot be confined to the clergy of the Anglican Church. The Dissenting bodies, many of whose

### *The Religious Revolution*

ministers achieved distinction in different fields—Isaac Watts as a hymn-writer, Daniel Neal as an historian, and Priestley as a chemist—were as split over doctrinal issues as their Anglican colleagues. Many of their ministers were veering more and more towards Unitarianism long before that word came into general use. Although the record of the Dissenting Academies in education was distinguished in this century, it is doubtful whether non-conformity had a greater hold over the working classes than the conventional churchmanship of the Anglican parson. At the other extreme, Roman Catholicism, still suffering like the Dissenters from the disabilities which had been imposed at the end of the seventeenth century, reached its lowest ebb in England in modern times. The chapels of the Spanish, Portuguese and Sardinian ambassadors had full congregations, but the atmosphere of the age was, as far as educated circles were concerned, generally alien to the splendid ritual of the Mass. Some men, like the historian, Edward Gibbon, might find a temporary refuge within the bounds of Roman Catholicism, only, however, to emerge without the little faith that they had originally possessed. Others found in Anglicanism the essential order and security lacking in the mysteries of Catholicism. Despite the intrepid work of Bishop Challoner at the beginning of the period and of Milner at the close, Catholicism made little headway. In the main religion was everywhere marking time.

#### *2. Wesleyanism*

The importance of Wesleyanism cannot be over-emphasised. It quickened the pulse of religion, giving thousands an abiding spiritual experience, emotional rather than intellectual, but none the less true. And whether it evoked a ready response or a speedy condemnation, it awakened the Church from the lethargy which encompassed it. But it did far more than this. It broke through the barriers of class, and by canalising the social discontent in spiritual channels and by awakening the social

### *John Wesley*

conscience of the people, it may well have saved England from the horrors of a French Revolution; or, opinion differs as to the desirability of the one or the other, may have perpetuated the rule of the propertied classes

Nothing of this could have been foreseen in 1703, the date of John Wesley's birth. The founder of the movement was much influenced by his early environment. His father, Samuel Wesley, originally a Dissenter, had become a High Church Anglican Vicar from 1697 to 1735 of the village of Epworth in Lincolnshire. He was a failure, a minor poet who believed that he was a major one, a political time-server whose services were never repaid, a parish priest taunted by his Low Church parishioners. John's mother, Susanna, daughter of a famous Dissenting minister, was the formative influence in his life. She had little time and increasing contempt for her husband's vagaries. Child-bearing, poverty, even the parishioners' active hostility, could not still her fierce, vigilant and devoted spirit. The children's early education and glowing faith came from her, her serenity and abiding religious zeal shaped her son's character and the movement he started. From the hardly happy atmosphere of Epworth, John passed to Charterhouse, Christ Church and Lincoln College, Oxford, of which he became a Fellow.

His religious life first began to blossom at Oxford. He describes its opening in the following words: 'in November, 1729, four young gentlemen of Oxford—Mr. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College; Mr Charles Wesley, Student of Christ Church; Mr Morgan, Commoner of Christ Church, and Mr Kirkham, of Merton College—began to spend some evenings a week in reading, chiefly the Greek Testament'. This little group, christened by hostile witnesses the 'Bible Moths' or 'Holy Club' or the 'Methodists,' was in fact reverting to High Church tradition in an effort to reinvigorate personal religion by sacramental principle and disciplined habit. They prayed and read sacred literature together. They carried their religion into ordinary life, visiting the Oxford Prison and bestowing their worldly goods for charitable purposes. It was now that Wesley

### *The Religious Revolution*

made a practical vow which he never broke. 'One of them,' he wrote, 'had thirty pounds a year. He lived on twenty-eight and gave away forty shillings. The next year, receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away thirty-two. The third year he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received a hundred and twenty pounds; still he lived as before on twenty-eight, and gave to the poor all the rest.' The social side of his work was thus closely associated with a stern self-discipline reflected in frequent Communion and regular fasting.

His reading was suggestively all-embracing, owing much to the High Churchmen of the late seventeenth century. This partly accounts for the eclectic nature of his own theological development as well as for the attraction of his piety, by comparison, for instance, with the rough-hewn religiosity of other and later sectaries. The early Fathers of the Church, à Kempis, and the splendid prose of Jeremy Taylor, became his favourite literature. He was also seriously affected by the *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call* of the devout Non-Juror, William Law.

But he was still troubled in mind. His ordination had caused him anxiety, for should he enter the ministry 'to eat a piece of bread?' The activities of the Holy Club did not entirely satisfy his soul. Should he stay on at Oxford or return to help his father? It was now that he was, as he saw it in the light of later events, guided by the divine hand into other fields. He was invited to go as a missionary to Oglethorpe's newly-founded colony of Georgia. 'Tuesday, October 14th, 1735,' reads the entry in his *Journal*, 'we found the *Simmonds* off Gravesend and immediately went on board.' 'Our end in leaving our native country, was not to avoid want . . . nor to gain the dung and dross of riches or honour: but simply this, to save our souls, to live wholly to the glory of God.'

Such commendable objects did not prevent the Wesleys' Georgian expedition from being an unmitigated disaster. The missionaries were enthusiastic, narrowly pious, awkward and arrogant; the colonists were the usual mixture of good, bad and

## Georgia

indifferent. From the very start things went wrong. Charles Wesley, who had gone out as Oglethorpe's secretary, soon disrupted the religious life of the small township of Frederica by trying to apply the stern discipline of the Holy Club there. A certain Dr. Hawkins fired off a gun while Charles was preaching, his subsequent imprisonment for which the embarrassed minister was responsible led to Mrs Hawkins' miscarriage. The justly irritated lady relieved her feelings by letting off another gun, near Charles' head. After Charles' departure, the odium fell on John. He also tried to maintain a rigid standard, drenching the colonists with 'the physic of an intolerant discipline'. This austerity has to be contrasted with a love affair with Sophy Hopkey. Wesley dallied with the idea of marriage. 'Miss Sophy,' he told her, 'I should think myself happy if I was to spend my life with you,' but he dallied too long. Miss Sophy became Mrs Williamson, and Wesley, without the least justification, refused to administer the Communion to her. Such blindness and arrogance were intolerable; the final affront to the long-suffering colonists had been administered. He was arrested and indicted on a series of charges, the details of which do not concern us. With the connivance of a friend, he escaped from Savannah and boarded the *Samuel*, bound for England.

Yet the Georgian expedition was not wholly unprofitable, for it had brought the two brothers into contact with the Moravian Brethren. The latter formed a Protestant Community, originally established in Bohemia and since 1737 under the lead of Count Zinzendorf. In their community at Herrnhut, they lived the Christian life with a fervour and sincerity that Wesley greatly admired. He had first met them on the *Simmonds*, when he had been much taken with their humility and hymn singing, and above all with the calmness of their faith. They alone had remained unafraid and cheerful in a storm. 'Were not your women and children afraid?' Wesley asked. 'No, we are not afraid to die,' came the answer. The contact thus made was improved in Georgia where Wesley was able to learn some of their simple and attractive melodic hymns. In one conversation



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the Moravian teacher, Spangenberg, asked, 'Do you know Jesus Christ?' 'I know,' replied Wesley, 'He is the Saviour of the World.' 'True,' said Spangenberg, 'but do you know He has saved you?' 'I hope He has died to save me.' 'But do you know yourself?' was the persistent question. Wesley wrote: 'I said, "I do," but I fear they were vain words' A rigid discipline and doctrine had so far failed to give Wesley spiritual security and this knowledge, supported by the awareness of his own failure in Georgia, made him unhappy and uneasy. In London—February 7th, 1738—he met another of the Moravian Brethren, Peter Bohler. 'By Bohler,' he wrote, 'I was clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved.'

The ground was now prepared spiritually and psychologically for conversion. Sooner or later the mind would be obliged to escape from the impasse into which belief and experience had forced it. Wesley must either have been an enthusiast or an unbeliever; it was incredible, with the influence of his mother as strong as it was, that he could be the latter. Actually Charles Wesley was the first to experience 'conversion.' Ill in bed, he was visited by his brother and some friends on Whitsunday morning; together they sang a hymn to the Holy Ghost. In this way Charles realised new-found hope and galloped, as was his wont, into verse.

Where shall my wondering soul begin?  
How shall I all to heaven aspire?  
A slave redeemed from death and sin,  
A brand plucked from eternal fire,  
How shall I equal triumphs raise  
Or sound my great Deliverer's praise?

Three days later, May 24th, so reads Wesley's *Journal*: 'In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation, and an assurance was given me that

### *Wesley's Assistants*

He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.' 'In other words, Wesley had found his *forte* in life, to preach the Gospel by all his powers, to bring to men the knowledge of salvation which he had so terrifically and finally received.

Wesley was nearly thirty-five in 1738, he died, his mind unclouded, fifty-three years later, in 1791. That half-century of continuous industry and prayer, made possible by the splendid physique and good health of this neat, efficient little man, fashioned and formed Methodism. Without the genius of Wesley, Methodism could never have been transformed into a Church possessed of the power and influence that it undoubtedly had at the end of the century. Yet Wesley depended on assistants, some of whom merit attention. The essential genius of his brother, Charles, lay in hymn-writing. His hymns have their faults, he wrote too quickly, was sometimes too diffuse and sentimental, but the simple melody and brilliant faith inspired many within and without the Methodist movement. 'Christ, whose glory fills the skies,' 'Jesus, Lover of my soul,' 'Hark! The herald angels sing,' 'Soldiers of Christ, arise,' 'Love divine, all loves excelling,' 'A charge to keep I have,' reveal that the poetic impulse of the father had come to fruition in his son to warm the heart with the joy of new-found peace and the privilege of worship.

Many other members of the Church of England helped Wesley. William Grimshaw of Haworth in Yorkshire, John Berridge of Everton, charitable John Fletcher of Madeley in Shropshire and the preacher William Romaine were some of the better-known parsons who sympathised with Wesley's objects. But the list of his assistants in the work of preaching and regeneration is motley and democratic in character; it included the soldier John Haime, the schoolmaster Christopher Hopper, the gentleman Robert Carr Brackenbury and the fervent stonemason John Nelson, who recounted the not untypical experience of a life's call in these words: 'I was like a wandering bird, cast out of the nest, till Mr. John Wesley came to preach his first sermon in

### *The Religious Revolution*

Moorfields Oh, that was a blessed morning to my soul! . . . When he had done, I said, " This man can tell the secrets of my heart: he hath not left me there; for he hath showed the remedy, even the blood of Jesus "'

Yet Wesley himself was the fountain-head of the movement. He had his faults like every other man. The slender thread of romance which served him so badly in the case of Sophy Hopkey again brought him pain, inability to come to a decision and final loss in the case of Grace Murray, and then in reaction deceived him into accepting a shrewish widow, Mary Vazeille At times, too, he was unbearably autocratic, while his ideas seem slender and illogical But his administrative capacity, foresight, vision and burning sincerity throw such faults into the background He was constantly travelling, preaching, converting In the precise well-formed English of his *Journal* he gives the records of over 250,000 miles of travelling over roads which sometimes defied description in all sorts of weather to all parts of the country, of sermons delivered and of their reception. From 1738 to the closing years of his life the genius of Wesley was the greatest single factor in the creation of the Wesleyan movement.

George Whitefield, alone of those who helped to make Methodism, demands comparison, but he was less great than Wesley, more histrionic, shallow, verbose, self-opinionated But he had a tremendous influence and reputation for which, reading through his sermons, it is to-day difficult to account. Mrs. Edwards, wife of the American minister, Jonathan Edwards, probably put her finger on the main element in his success when she wrote ' you have heard of his deep-toned, yet clear and melodious voice. It is perfect music. . . . I have seen upwards of a thousand people hang upon his words with breathless silence, broken only by an occasional half-suppressed sob '

This sweet-voiced, restless preacher was born at Gloucester in 1714. After schooling there ' I put on my blue apron, and my snuffers, washing mops, cleaned rooms, and, in one word, became professed and common drawer for nigh a year and a half.' From the Bell Inn, where he served as tapster, he returned

*George Whitefield*

to school and thence as a servitor to Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1732. Reading through Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* he became aware of a mission in life and, some weeks after Easter, 1735, 'I was delivered from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me. . . . The spirit of mourning was taken from me, and I knew what it was truly to rejoice in God my Saviour.' Although of uncanonical age he persuaded the Bishop of Oxford to ordain him, and his first sermon, it was reported, drove fifteen people mad, a rare achievement for parsons. 'As I proceeded,' he said, 'I perceived that the fire kindled, till at last, though so young, and amidst a crowd who knew me in my childish days, I trust I was enabled to speak with some degree of gospel authority.'

His preaching attracted hearers wherever he went. Returning to London from Georgia, he renewed his contact with the Wesleys and was soon preaching freely all over the country. The novelty of preaching in the open air and the burning eloquence of his sermons drew thousands to hear him, at Kingswood, or Moorfields, or Kennington Common in London. For the next thirty years he made the world his parish; thirteen times he crossed the Atlantic to America where the orphanage which he cherished was his best monument.

His relations with the Wesleys were strained by theological differences, leading to a breach which was never wholly repaired. Like his friend, the Welsh Calvinist Howel Harris, Whitefield followed strict Calvinist views in respect of election, predestination and reprobation. 'I frankly acknowledge,' he wrote, 'I believe the doctrine of reprobation, in this view, that God intends to give His saving grace, through Jesus Christ, only to a certain number, and that the rest of mankind . . . will at last suffer that eternal death, which is its proper wages.' Although the breach with the Wesleys was healed in 1741, the Whitefield group, patronised by the pious Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, remained outside the general orbit of Methodism.

It soon became clear that the Wesleyan Movement was moving away from the established Church, whether its leaders wished to

### *The Religious Revolution*

secede or not. Charles Wesley remained completely orthodox. John, as diffident and even unwilling, saw the impossibility of the situation; 'their enemies,' he wrote, 'provoke the people to it, the clergy in particular, most of whom, far from thanking them for continuing in the Church, use all the means in their power, fair and unfair, to drive them out of it. Church or no church, we must attend to the work of saving souls.' Regarded with the gravest suspicion by many parish priests, condemned by the bishops, the Wesleyans steadily formed their own organisation and methods of non-episcopal ordination. Unfortunate as the secession was, it was largely an inevitable development. Wesley himself was an instinctive individualist who disliked organisation and was jealous of all authority save his own. Lacking the sympathy of the established Church, he decided to follow the bent of the Spirit. This meant the institution of a totally different form of organisation, congregational rather than episcopal, based far more on the Scriptures than on the tradition and teaching of the Church. In the course of time the characteristic features of Methodism evolved, equality of ministers and laymen, non-episcopal organisation, government through the circuit meeting, district meeting and annual conference.

As in Scottish Presbyterianism, the parent movement was obliged to witness a series of secessions, generally arising out of problems connected with Church organisation. In 1797 Alexander Kilham founded the New Methodist Connexion which gave greater authority to the laity. A decade or so later Clowes and Bourne, two Staffordshire local preachers, began holding the gigantic revivalist meetings in the open air which eventually led to the establishment of the Primitive Methodists. Such secessions reflect the emphasis that the leaders of the movement placed on emotional salvation and the slow fading of the ideal of the corporate Church.

Wesleyanism would not have had the following it had if circumstances had not favoured it. The apathy and complacency of the established Church, and especially its failure to provide a medium for attracting the loyalty of the lower middle and working

### *The Essence of Wesleyanism*

classes, formed the Wesleyan's opportunity. It met a definite religious need, filled a vacuum that might conceivably have been pervaded by revolutionary ideas.

The essential significance of Wesleyanism must depend ultimately on individual opinion. Naturally emotional rather than intellectual, it had little influence over theological or philosophical development. It concentrated on the practical side of life, infusing its followers with the virtues of good, if at times, rather narrow, Christian living. Time and time again Wesley emphasised the practicality of religion. 'I find more profit in sermons on either good tempers, or good works, than in what are vulgarly called "Gospel Sermons"'. Or again 'Christianity is essentially a social religion, and . . . to turn it into a solitary religion is indeed to destroy it'. And finally, 'the Gospel of Christ knows of no Religion but Social, no Holiness but Social Holiness'. Man, a creature of sin, saved through grace, must advance through good works towards perfection. This sums up the Wesleyan view of the individual. There was nothing wrong with riches but the rich man must live frugally, giving away all that he can, showing his brotherhood with the poor man. There was nothing essentially wrong with poverty, but the poor man must discard vice and extravagance and work hard. This teaching was very effective. Employers preferred Methodist workmen, Sir Robert Peel commented in 1787 that 'I have left most of my works in Lancashire under the management of Methodists and they serve me exceedingly well'. Religion, individual in its form, was social in its implications.

Where weavers expound, as they sit at the loom,  
Where mechanics, inspired, the Gospel explain,  
And weave at a text as well as a chain.

Education, almsgiving and charity, the relief of the sick, the improvement in prison conditions, the abolition of the slave trade, the reformation of manners and the decline of drunkenness all owed an inestimable debt to the Wesleyan movement. If it was the most important single factor in counteracting the French Revolution, it was also of decisive significance in raising the

### *The Religious Revolution*

general standard of life—spiritual, moral and physical, especially in the new industrial areas where the clergy of the established Church had failed to fulfil their vocation. ‘To you,’ said Priestley, chemist and Unitarian minister, addressing the Methodists, ‘is the civilisation, the industry, and sobriety of great numbers of the labouring part of the community owing.’ The verdict was both just and true.

### *3 The Evangelical Revival*

Methodism was not the only force which contributed to a revival of religion. Intimately connected with it but kept wholly within the Church of England, the Evangelical Movement was essentially personal. Its most obvious object was a revival of personal religion in the Church and its major theological belief, an affirmation in salvation by faith in the atoning work of Christ. ‘The Evangelicals,’ writes Canon Smyth, ‘were men of that indomitable moral earnestness which has its roots in prayer and in that real pastoral love for men and women in which prayer finds a proper outlet. Their appeal was addressed directly to the conscience: it was simple, profound and radical: and it based itself on Scripture proofs.’

Like the Wesleyan, the Evangelical had his faults which became more apparent as the movement reached its climax after 1815. It made its appeal primarily to the upper and middle classes and only touched the fringes of industrial society through the personal benevolence of its members. Evangelicalism was happier in baronial mansions or the stuccoed villas of Cheltenham and Clapham than in the homes of the poor. Its leaders were able to combine passionate enthusiasm for the abolition of slavery with unrelenting opposition to political and social change. The barrenness of the movement at its worst, and the statement is not intended to deny the charm and attraction of its unyielding devotion, may result from its unintellectual nature. Like Methodism, it by-passed Deism and similar cults by ‘its appeal to the hearts and consciences of men.’ Its conception of the

### *The Evangelicals*

Church was curiously diffuse and, possibly for this very reason, it remained attached to Anglicanism. Apart from this, it depended for its continuity on persons rather than policies.

In its origins it was linked with Wesleyanism and the circumstances that gave rise to it, the dissatisfaction with the apparent sterility of practice and belief of the established Church. Its early leaders were men who had come under Wesley's influence, including Grimshaw and Berridge. A personal call lay at the root of its teaching, as the life-story of John Newton displays. Formerly the captain of a slaver, he had lived riotously until he had felt a sudden call to the Christian faith. He found, and if his own account of his early life is true it is in no way surprising, some difficulty in persuading any bishop to ordain him. Ordained at last, he became curate at Olney, unconsciously the evil genius of the poet Cowper's religious fantasies, and then coming into contact with the Evangelical Lord Dartmouth, a member of North's Cabinet, and the banker Thornton, he was preferred to the important London rectory of St Mary Woolnoth. His fervent conviction that heaven and hell were an ever-present choice, that faith and grace were intrinsic essentials in a divine scheme, leading to an eternal life which completely overshadowed present existence, were typical of early Evangelical belief.

Of the other early Evangelicals, the two Venns, father and son, Isaac Milner and Charles Simeon demand attention. Henry Venn (1724-1797) was Vicar, first of Huddersfield where he made his church a live centre of real religion, and then of the Cambridgeshire village of Yelling whence he could make his influence felt in the University. His son, John (1759-1813), was Rector of Clapham and the religious adviser to the group of Evangelicals known subsequently as the 'Clapham Sect.' Isaac Milner, the chief brain of the group, a mathematician rather than a theologian, was a Cambridge don at Queen's College, later Dean of Carlisle. The influence of Milner and the elder Venn did much to mould the personality and teaching of the group's most saintly representative in the University, Charles Simeon.



### *The Religious Revolution*

Simeon's career was uneventful, for all that he was the most influential priest the Evangelicals possessed. From Eton he went to King's, Cambridge, of which he was a Fellow from 1782 to 1836. As Curate-in-charge of Trinity Church, he exerted great influence in the University and drew vast crowds to hear him preach, but the secret of his significance is to be found less in his preaching than in the manner of his life. Thoughtless and apathetic towards religious questions, his interest had been newly awakened by the college rule enforcing obligatory reception of the Communion. Meditation led to a cessation of anxiety, a realisation of new-found peace. 'From that hour peace flowed in rich abundance into my soul, and at the Lord's Table in our chapel I had the sweetest access to God through my blessed Saviour' From this time onwards his life was an essay in personal austerity, in spending little and in meditating, in fasting and reading devotional literature. The emphasis which he placed on self-sacrifice aroused some derision and hostility, but time and his own obvious sincerity were on his side. No one had a greater influence in the University than Simeon. 'If you knew,' said the future historian, Macaulay, who was up at Trinity in Simeon's time, 'what his authority and influence were, and how they extended from Cambridge to the most remote corners of England, you would allow that his real sway over the Church was far greater than that of any primate'

Simeon's genius was distilled through the University into the world by a combination of 'coherent principle with consistent practice,' but from the very start the movement had as many important followers among the laity as among the clergy. Hannah More was one of them. Coming up to London she acquired a reputation for writing plays, but her ideas gradually grew more serious, the attractions of London society lessened, as she became friendly with the Evangelicals. In 1785 she went to live at Cowslip Green, near Bristol, so that she could 'now,' as she wrote, 'dedicate myself to Thee with a more entire surrender than I have ever made.' For the next forty-eight years her practical religion flowered in good works, more particularly

### *William Wilberforce*

in the foundation and superintendence of day and Sunday schools for poor children in and around Cheddar. Her writings had an immense circulation. Bishops sought her advice. Statesmen were honoured by her letters. Hannah More had rejected the world of her youth, but both worlds were illumined by her fame. Her austerity and rigidity did not wither her natural attraction, she remained charming, sociable, as serene in prayer and kindness as she had once been in the fashionable drawing-rooms of cultured society.

William Wilberforce was fourteen years younger than Hannah More, but with her and Simeon he was the third most important leader in the Evangelical movement of the period. Criticism, and there is room for it in that rigidity of teaching and smugness of principle which typified so many of its leading members, is stilled by the charm and sanctity of his character. It was in 1784 that he met Milner and travelled with him to the French Riviera. As a result of the conversation which they had on the return journey, ideas, one supposes, already implicit in Wilberforce's mind, were consummated in a gradual realisation that personal religion counted before all else and must be the foundation on which everything depended. Such intensity of conviction only came after a bitter inward struggle, 'what madness is all this, to continue easy in a state in which a sudden call out of the world would consign me to everlasting misery, and that when eternal happiness is within my grasp'. But the feeling of misery and guilt which with other men seems often to have canalised their awareness of salvation in an aloofness from the world of men, grim rather than gay in their knowledge of Christ, only awakened in Wilberforce a new and insistent charm. More serious than he used to be, he yet realised that narrowness of character was no saving grace. From this time forward his conscience governed all his actions and, since Wilberforce was a member of Parliament and a friend of the Prime Minister, influential and liked in high society, his conscience was from the historical angle more important than most. There were those who then and since have felt repelled by his apparent inconsistency in remaining a

### *The Religious Revolution*

stalwart Tory in politics while yet advocating many humane reforms, and have dubbed him hypocrite. The charge is unjust. The Evangelicals did not wish to change the political and economic system; they were concerned primarily with improving the condition of souls in that society. His impassioned opposition to abuses, to the slave trade, to duelling, to cruelty to animals, to the employment of young children as chimney-sweeps—to mention only a few of the causes in which he interested himself—and the inexhaustible energy with which he sought to rectify them, flowed straight from his Bible Christianity. ‘God Almighty,’ he exclaimed in his *Journal*, ‘has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade and the reformation of manners’ It was towards these two objects that he directed his life. ‘When I look,’ Romilly told the members in the course of the last debate on the slave trade, ‘to the man at the head of the French monarchy [i.e., Napoleon], surrounded as he is with all the pomp of power and all the pride of victory . . . and when I follow that man into his closet or to his bed, and consider the pangs with which his solitude must be tortured . . . and when I compare with those pangs of remorse the feelings which must accompany my honourable friend from this House to his home, after the vote of this night shall have confirmed the object of his humane and unceasing labours; when he retires into the bosom of his happy and delighted family, when he lays himself down on his bed, reflecting on the innumerable voices that will be raised in every quarter of the world to bless him, how much more pure and perfect felicity must he enjoy, in the consciousness of having preserved so many millions of his fellow creatures than . . .’ The speaker could get no further; the whole House rose spontaneously and cheered Wilberforce. It was a fitting tribute.

Wilberforce was the natural leader of the group of like-minded men which included, besides Milner and Simeon, the bankers Thornton, the merchant and anti-slaver, Zachary Macaulay, Sir John Shore who governed India, Lord Glenelg who sat at the Colonial Office under Grey and Lord Bexley who, as Vansittart

### *The Clapham Group*

was Liverpool's Chancellor of Exchequer. Clapham was then a countrified district, graced by handsome stone and brick villas surrounded by large gardens where lived men of eminence and wealth. The parish church, foursquare, late Wren in type, opened in 1776, had as rectors, Sir James Stonhouse and the younger Venn, who acted as spiritual guides to this pious group. The force of the Evangelical movement came from its social connection, for it was this which led in time to the preferment of Evangelical clergy to high office, the appointment of Lord Harrowby's brother, Henry Ryder, as Bishop of Gloucester in 1815 was thus suggestive for the future. The charity and the beneficence of the good and great forwarded the building of churches, the encouragement of missionary work, the abolition of slavery, the dissemination of religious tracts and the reformation of manners.

For the cultivation of personal virtue was the specific feature of the movement. Worship played an essential part in this. Although the Evangelicals have been accused of neglecting the Sacraments, there is much to suggest that they held the Sacrament of Communion in reverent esteem. Family prayers, whether in church or in the home, were an innovation for which the leaders of the movement seem to have been responsible. 'In the autumn of 1818,' wrote the Duchess of Beaufort's daughter, 'mamma first began to have family prayers of a morning in her room with her maids and ourselves . . . Afterwards she made arrangements for family prayers, including the men servants as well as female servants, for evening as well as morning prayers.' A renewed emphasis on grace before meals and a rigid observance of Sunday were other leading features of the movement; Wilberforce deplored the increasing popularity of Sunday newspapers and the drilling of volunteers on Sunday during the Napoleonic wars. The Evangelicals were scrupulous in their attendance at Church, appreciative of long addresses and generous in their gifts. Their universal condemnation of cards and, to a less degree, of horse-racing, is understandable in that age of excessive gambling, but their indiscriminate detestation

### *The Religious Revolution*

of play-going savours of priggishness. A certain rigidity was inseparable from the Puritan spirit of the movement, and in extenuation it may be urged that it constituted a wholesome corrective against the vices of the Prince Regent's court and of high society. It certainly formed the foundation of character; a veritable cornucopia from which good works flowed.

#### *4. Religion and Society*

If the age was not very religious, it held the benevolence and humanitarianism which flowed from religious principle in the highest esteem, 'no sooner,' said Dr Johnson in 1758, 'is a new species of misery brought to view and the design of relieving it proposed than every hand is open to contribute something, every tongue is busied in solicitation and every art of pleasure is employed for a time in the interests of virtue.' The somnolence of Anglicanism and the stagnation of diocesan life are certainly deceptive if they suggest that the influence of religion greatly declined. The country clergy often carried out their duties admirably. 'The Hanoverian Church,' says Canon Smyth, 'was justified, not by its triumph over Deism, but by the lives and labours of its parochial clergy at their best.' The enthralling history of the Charity Schools, the tremendous circulation enjoyed by the books, pamphlets and tracts printed by the S.P.C.K. and other societies, prove that the mass of men and women in Georgian England were religious at heart. Scepticism and irreligion were confined mainly to a few members of high society. By 1815 the Church of England as well as the other Christian groups, Roman Catholic and Nonconformist, were much more alive than they had been a century earlier.

This revival was caused by the movements which we have just described, but it was not brought about by any one thing alone. To some degree it was an unconscious rejoinder to the scepticism inbred in the French Revolution, and an effort to protect property and the propertied classes against the

## *Religion and Society*

insidious threats arising from the same cause. It was no accident that England had her first thinking Christian Prime Minister in Spencer Perceval, or that there were more religiously minded men in Liverpool's Cabinet than there had been in any earlier ministry. The fear of social anarchy, coupled with religious disbelief, stemmed the tide of scepticism in England as on the Continent. Hannah More and many another sincerely used their religious beliefs to defend the rights of property, the privileges of society and the class structure.

Church building is an excellent index of religious enthusiasm. The Tory High Church party which won a great victory over their Whig opponents in 1710 sought to signalise their triumph by building fifty new churches. The Whigs returned in 1714; between 1711 and 1730 only eight new churches, some indeed of the loveliest in the capital, a few extra steeples and other works were actually undertaken. Not many churches were built between 1760 and 1815. And then, three years after Waterloo, the government agreed to subsidise new churches for the growing population to the extent of a million pounds. These churches vary in architectural achievement but their real failure was far less architectural than functional. They expressed an Erastian conception of religion, of religion as the bulwark of the social order and the ally of 'new wealth and faded aristocracy'.

Yet dormant as Christianity appeared to be, its achievements were considerable. To list them is to see something of the way in which religion penetrated the life of Hanoverian England. Three streams coalesced into a running river: the fervour of the Wesleyan movement, the missionary impulse of Evangelicism, and the activity of the established Church and the High Church tradition, revealed through the writings of John Jebb and Alexander Knox (who was Castlereagh's secretary as well as a theologian).

The work of the High Church tradition coupled with the orthodox position was chiefly philosophical and took the form of defending the principles of the Church against the sceptic and the heretic. The Bangorian Controversy provides the best

### *The Religious Revolution*

illustration of this defensive apologetic at work. Bishop Hoadly of Bangor, later translated to richer sees by a grateful government, preached a sermon at the Chapel Royal on the text 'my kingdom is not of this world,' in which he ridiculed the authority of the visible Church. The wrath of the lower clergy was so intense that the government had to spring to the defence of its champion by suspending the meeting of the Lower Houses of Convocation in 1717. Hoadly's was distinctly a Pyrrhic victory. In fact Convocation had not been a reality since the Restoration. His views evoked no welcome, even from his own colleagues on the Bench, and so great was the resentment that a multitude of pamphlets were issued in condemnation of Hoadly's ideas.

This defensive attitude, displayed convincingly in Hoadly's case, was also used to combat what has been called a renewal of the Arian controversy, of that perennial discussion about the person of Christ. Samuel Clarke, Queen Caroline's friend, who was Rector of St. James's, Westminster, had asserted that Christ's divinity was only a 'communicated' divinity. His views were refuted with trenchant logic and learning by Daniel Waterland, the Master of Magdalene, Cambridge. Arianism, which obviously appealed to the rational mind of the contemporary scholar, had little real staying power, even if the rise of Unitarianism towards the close of the century represented a continuance of a similar tradition.

Deism was a more dangerous foe. Shortly defined as the belief in God drawn from the experience and order of nature, it was fashionable in England and on the Continent. As its positive tenets were vague, its importance arose mainly from the destructive nature of its teaching. Placing all their confidence in the power of the human reason, its exponents, Toland in *Christianity not Mystrious* and Tindal in *Christianity as old as the Creation*, questioned the authenticity of the Scriptures, the Incarnation and the Miracles. Religion was thus reduced to a belief in a God, whose characteristics were unknowable but whose probable benevolence has provided man with a moral law by which he can guide his life. Deism's attraction lay in its

## Deism

essential reasonableness, and in the fact that it was at least covered by a religious guise.

It proved much more dangerous on the Continent, where it afforded a crystal-cool contrast to the superstitious fopperies of contemporary Roman Catholicism, than in England. The Church of England was not lacking in apologists. The High Churchmen or Non-Jurors, Charles Leslie (1650-1722) and William Law, provided some excellent writers. Law combined holiness with personal attraction. He liked his glass of wine at dinner and his pipe of tobacco in the evening, but the intensity of his religious life, reflected in his masterly *Call to a Devout and Serious Life*, was far more influential in controverting Deism than any intellectual argument. Although the book was intellectually alive, that was not its particular attraction. It was the way in which Law brought his readers to the inner reality of religion that made him so influential a force. Intellectual arguments for overcoming Deism were not lacking. The best was Joseph Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, a refutation of the Deist position and a learned apology on behalf of revelation, a book that has rightly remained an English classic.

Apart from the intellectual and philosophical sway still wielded by the Church, it also proved in all its branches, Anglican, Wesleyan and Evangelical, a beneficial influence in the life and manners of the people. The most obvious vices of all classes were immorality, drinking, gambling, irreligion and profanity. Such vices were probably implicit in the social structure and would only tend to disappear when it was remodelled; the Church nevertheless paid a close attention to the problem and established societies to check current social evils.

But the work of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners at the beginning and end of the century was probably limited in scope and effect. Far more profound social effects were obtained by the educational work of the Church. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was founded in 1698 to disseminate religious tracts and to promote a movement for founding parish schools. It met with a remarkable success in



### *The Religious Revolution*

carrying out both these objects. The tracts, which it distributed, deal with an infinite variety of subjects: popular devotion, preparation for Communion, tracts for servants, soldiers, sailors, publicans, farmers, prisoners and smugglers. They were written in homely English and often went into several editions; Josiah Woodward's *The Soldier's Monitor*, originally distributed to the soldiers of Marlborough's army, reached its thirtieth edition in 1802.

The Charity Schools, a term which included a variety of schools run by the S.P.C.K., local clergy, trusts and Dissenters, proved the most remarkable educational phenomenon of the century. Thousands of schools were founded for the instruction of hundreds of thousands of children. Although they came into existence primarily to condition the children for the position which they were to occupy later in society, and to counteract the twin growth of irreligion and pauperism, they served a useful purpose. They ingrained a habit of work and thrift while they provided instruction in the Bible and Catechism as well as in writing and early arithmetic. The regulations usually insisted that each school should be under the superintendence of a master who 'frequents Communion' and who realised that it was his duty, in the schools under the control of the local clergy, to prepare poor children for the Catechism and full membership of the Church. The schools also apprenticed boys to trades, and even gave the girls instruction in sewing, knitting and spinning. In some cases they housed and clothed their pupils as well. Their success was instantaneous, a report for Wales alone in 1760 tells us that there were 218 schools in the Principality, housing nearly ten thousand pupils.

The excellence of the work done by the Charity Schools, which, of course, only slightly diminished the degree of actual illiteracy in the country, was later supplemented by the Sunday Schools, and by the work of the Bell and Lancaster Schools, primary schools founded by the National Society under the aegis of the established Church, and on an interdenominational basis by the British and Foreign Schools Society.

### *Missionary Enterprise*

Neither religion nor public opinion exerted much influence over University or secondary education. There were very few schools attended by the children of upper class society which were even remotely affected by anything but a very conventional religion. The absence of real religion in the public schools was already being commented on, Westminster under Dr. Vincent was in this respect superior to Eton and Harrow. Kingswood was founded by Wesley to provide education for the sons of Wesleyan ministers and was one of the schools that aimed to cater for the children of the middle class. The Dissenting Academies in general had an excellent record in education in the century.

The eighteenth-century Church was not very interested in missionary enterprise, even though the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts was carved out of the S.P.C.K. in 1701 to promote missionary work in the English Plantations in America. Bishop Watson of Llandaff expressed a commonly-held opinion when he replied to a request to support the work of the S.P.G. in 1788 by saying that 'he did not expect much success in propagating Christianity by missionaries from any part of Christendom, but he expected much from the extension of science and commerce.' The tremendous burst in missionary activity and the foundation of bishoprics abroad under the direct patronage of the English government<sup>1</sup> was a result of the impulse given to mission work by the Evangelicals, powerfully backed by the Wesleyan and other Nonconformist bodies. Hence the foundation of the Church Missionary Society in 1799, and of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1803.

Apart from missions and education, the Church at home influenced the life of the nation in a great many ways, more particularly by the general impetus it gave to humanitarian and

<sup>1</sup> The consecration of a bishop for the American Church after the War of American Independence, Bishop Seabury, was performed by bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church, the English bishops refused as Seabury could not take the oath of allegiance. The close association between the government and missionary enterprise is shown by the size of the government grant to the S.P.G.: 1814, £1,800, 1825, £22,664; 1832, £13,750, 1834, £4,990.

### *The Religious Revolution*

philanthropic enterprises. Anglicans and Dissenters played a prominent part in the movement for the abolition of the slave trade and the emancipation of the slaves, for an improvement in the conditions of the working classes, for penal and prison reform. That they could have done more, that they were to some extent conditioned by their fear of revolution and disorder goes without saying. Yet what they actually did provides an answer of some magnitude to the trite opinion often expressed about religious life in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The Georgian Church, then, widely interpreted, prepared the way for the vigorous spiritual life of the coming period. Too stagnant and comfortable as was Christianity for the most part during much of the period, there were yet forces of widely-differing appeal and importance at work which jerked it forward and so led, in part, to a recovery of its hold over the country.

## CHAPTER XI

### GEORGE III AND 'PERSONAL RULE,' 1760-1782

#### 1. *George III and his ideas on government*

The new King was twenty-two years of age in 1760. That in itself is sufficient to suggest that the long-accepted notions about what are ordinarily called the 'royal experiments' are inaccurate. Historians have for long asserted that George III was educated under the shadow of Bolingbroke's essay on Kingship, the *Patriot King*, that he took to heart his mother's advice, 'George, be a King,' by overthrowing the Whig oligarchy and the system of government established by the Revolution of 1688 and by installing a series of administrations, whose authority he maintained by means of what Burke called 'influence.' The end of the War of American Independence, it is added, caused by George's own stupidity and obstinacy, and the subsequent resignation of his tool, Lord North, brought to nothing his schemes for enhancing the personal authority of the Crown. These oft-repeated ideas convey an entirely fallacious and misleading impression of the King and the so-called "personal rule."

George's own character and upbringing to some extent explain these errors. His father, Frederick, Prince of Wales, whose life has been, not without justification, described as 'such a tissue of childishness and falsehood as could only serve to show that there is nothing which mankind will not put up with where power is lodged,' had died in 1751. He was left in the care of his mother, Augusta of Saxe-Gotha, a German princess selected by George II because most of the other possible candidates had too much madness in their family; 'I did not think ingrafting my half-witted coxcomb upon a madwoman would mend the breed.' Naturally, the Princess-mother detested George II and the Whig

### *George III and 'Personal Rule'*

connection, but her husband's death left her momentarily defenceless. The Pelhams, who headed the ministry, could either have taken the child away from Leicester House and have arranged for the Regency of the Duke of Cumberland, the boy's uncle and the best-hated man in England, or they could have let the Princess and her son live at Leicester House in the hope they could exert some control over her.

It was arranged that the Princess of Wales should continue as guardian of her son and should be appointed Regent in the event of his succeeding to the throne. Cumberland, the other alternative for this post, was exceedingly unpopular. His brother, the Prince, had even gone to the length of founding a newspaper to circulate stories about the atrocities which Cumberland had committed at the time of the '45 rebellion. As Cumberland was unacceptable, the King and the ministry decided to let the Princess and her son live at Leicester House, and to protect their own influence appointed as the young prince's chief tutors, Lord Harcourt, a man of quality but little brain, Bishop Hayter of Norwich, a conventionally-minded prelate of Whig views, and Andrew Stone, who for the last twenty years had been Newcastle's secretary and the recipient of most of his confidences. The scheme naturally caused friction. Harcourt and the Bishop charged their other colleagues, including Stone, with expounding 'Tory' principles which in brief could have been identified with the views published by Bolingbroke in the *Patriot King*. The accusation was so groundless that no more was heard of it, but it was committed to paper by no less an authority than Horace Walpole in his *Memoirs of the Reign of George III*. Walpole received the information through a series of sources, all now discredited, and argued that the real reason for the disasters of George's reign was to be found in the education instilled in him by the followers of Bolingbroke. This has now been revealed to be completely and entirely groundless.

In fact, however, George was a difficult boy to teach. His father seems to have been mentally undeveloped and there is evidence to suggest that this was also true of his son. He was

### *George's Political Views*

dull and backward at his lessons, apathetic and sleepy in his general attitude. He was unable to read properly until he was eleven. He was brought up under the watchful eye of his mother and Lord Bute. Both, especially the former, had good reason to be critical of the Whig oligarchy, and taught George to detest his grandfather and his advisers. But that is a very different matter from saying that George III was educated with a view to formulating a definite political programme. His letters are full of abuse of the King and the Whig ministers, but this again was in complete agreement with what had always happened in the entourage of the heir-apparent. Each Hanoverian was supposed by his son to be in the grip of self-seeking politicians, from whom the throne would be freed when he himself became King.

George's political views were simple, pious statements largely founded upon this kind of teaching, which in themselves had no political importance whatever. Take, for instance, an early essay which he wrote on King Alfred. 'We may safely affirm,' he wrote, 'that no good and great Prince born in a free country and like Alfred fond of the cause of liberty, will ever despair of restoring his country to virtue, freedom and glory, even though he mounts the throne in the worst-corrupted times, in storms of inward faction and the most threatening circumstances without.' But statements of this kind do not provide the slightest evidence that there was ever a deep-laid scheme for re-establishing the power of the Crown.

The new King was in any case too young and inexperienced to introduce a carefully-formulated programme. The Princess-mother's influence was considerable but, apart from her dislike of her father-in-law, very imprecise politically. Bute's influence was greater but was certainly not directed towards the establishment of any form of absolute government. George himself was a backward, rather neurotic young man. He had a high sense of duty and responsibility; 'I glory,' as he said, 'in the name of Britain,' so much so that in a letter to Bute written in August, 1759, he described Hanover as a 'horrid Electorate which has always liv'd upon the very vitals of this poor country.' He

### George III and 'Personal Rule'

detested tyranny and abhorred absolutism. He revered the forms, traditions and the content of constitutional government to a greater extent than any of his immediate predecessors. He was pious in a real yet conventional sense.

George might thus appear to be a conventional, high-minded, slightly dense English gentleman. But there was more to his personality than this. He had greater shrewdness, ability and skill than some historians have recognised. His relations to his various ministers and his comments and decisions all convey the impression, in later years, of an able, experienced man who knew something of the art of government.

If George had no preconceptions about government, except those traditionally associated with the heir to the throne, why should so much attention have been paid to the 'royal experiments'? We have seen that the Bolingbroke legend has been discredited. Burke's *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents* embellished this legend and provided a niche for it in English history. Burke sought to explain to the members of his own political group the foundations on which their own policy might be built and justified. For the last ten years, Burke was writing in 1770, the Crown had played a prominent part in the country's political life. The opposition, he argued, had been involved in a great battle to save the country from a party of King's men who were trying to free the Crown from the control of its ministers by using the vast influence which it possessed. But Burke's interpretation of history was misleading, if not false.

The Crown did, however, change its policy in 1760, and take a more direct part in the appointment and formation of ministries than it had done in the past half-century. This was the effect of circumstances over which George III had no control. During the last fifty years, two factors had played an exceptionally important part in political history. The first was the willingness of George I and his son to entrust the government to their leading supporters, groups of Whig lords. The latter had been able to employ their own private patronage as well as the patronage and influence which the Crown possessed of right, to retain

### *The Disintegration of the Whigs*

their power. In other words, superficially and perhaps more fundamentally, the Whig oligarchy controlled the kingdom, even if its leading representatives at all times recognised their dependence on the King. The second factor was the significant relationship which existed from 1714 until 1751, the date of Frederick's death, between the opposition party and the heir to the throne. The opposition party had what has been called a 'reversionary interest' in the succession. 'The whole political situation from Newcastle's point of view,' says Mr. Romney Sedgwick, 'could be expressed in the formula: "Seventy-four (the age of George II—actually 73—in 1757) is ten years more than sixty-four (his own age), and fifty-five years more than nineteen (the age of the future George III)": or in other words that if Newcastle wished for security in the present and for salvation in the future he must recognise the impossibility of withstanding "the influence of the young court, which will gather new strength every month after seventy-four"' Now what he had feared, had happened. There was no heir to the throne around whom the opposition could cluster; 'there is now,' wrote Hardwicke, 'no *reversionary* resource. Instead of an old King and a young successor, a young healthy King and no successor in view' The two factors which had been operative in the last two reigns disappeared. While Leicester House influence coalesced in St James's Palace, the Whig party disintegrated.

The break-up of the Whig party resulted from the predominance of Pitt. He had stood well above the natural groups and associations, even of his own family. The events of 1761 revealed to George III that Pitt's resignation placed the Crown in a difficult position, and at the same time gave him an opportunity to do what he had long wanted, to give power to Bute. Irrespective of party ties, the King acted directly and independently.

As the King became more experienced, his political ideas tended to crystallise and become more precise. He held very definite views about the nature of British government. He abhorred despotism and recognised sincerely what he termed the 'beauty, excellence and perfection of the British constitution as



### *George III and 'Personal Rule'*

by law established.' He knew that the Crown possessed certain privileges and rights under the Revolution settlement of 1689, of which the most important was the appointment of the ministers. The King could and did appoint ministers who were attached to no particular party or represented no majority in Parliament. George I and George II had both exercised this power, but usually in favour of the governing Whig cliques. George III used his right to appoint as he himself thought fit, taking into account the political situation at the time of the appointment. The patronage and influence which the Crown possessed were not necessarily therefore conferred on the representatives of any one group.

Thus while George III wished to exercise the powers which he thought that he possessed under the Constitution, he started his reign by making the best of the particular situation which confronted him. The researches of recent historians, Professor L. B. Namier in particular, have thrown a completely new light on the 'personal experiments' of George III. There was no real break in constitutional development. All that George did was to carry on 'to the best of his more-than-limited ability, the system of government which he had inherited from his predecessors.'

#### *2 The formation of ministries, 1762-1782*

Faced with the necessity of choosing an administration which would fall in with his own wishes and yet acquire and retain a majority in the House of Commons, the King was often confronted with a dilemma. In an effort to solve this perpetually-recurring problem, he played every card in the pack, irrespective of party or personality. What he wanted was a ministry which would look to the King for guidance and to Parliament and the people for support. This was not an easy thing to attain in the fluctuating political scene of the early years of the reign, and it was not until the younger Pitt was appointed to lead the ministry

### *Bute*

in 1783 that George found a solution that ultimately suited both the country and himself. Paradoxically, as the future history of the reign showed, Pitt's accession to power marked both the success and failure of the royal policy.

The first minister was the unpopular 'Northern thane,' John Stuart, Earl of Bute, who had tutored the King in politics before his accession. A member of a Whig family, Bute had spent his childhood in England, only going to Scotland in 1741, where he lived a penurious existence until he married an heiress<sup>1</sup>. Coming south, he attracted the attention of the Prince of Wales by his skill at cards and private theatricals. From 1751 to 1754, he relapsed into obscurity, reappearing in the latter year as the leading adviser to the widowed Princess and tutor to her son. His influence was considerable. He believed, as all those at Leicester House did, that the Duke of Cumberland would try to seize power on the death of George II and so challenge the principles of the Constitution. This perfectly absurd idea influenced his political thinking, and shows how improbable it is that he intended to make the King into an autocrat.

It was only natural, however, that his own ambitions and George's distrust of the late King's advisers should soon have repercussions on politics. The King revered Bute with cub-like adulation, 'My dearest Friend,' he wrote, 'I have often heard you say, that you don't think I shall have the same friendship for you when I am married as I now have. I shall never change in that, nor will I ever bear to be in the least deprived of your company.' On Holderness's opportune resignation, Bute was appointed a Secretary of State. His inclusion in the ministry only increased the divisions, especially those between Pitt and Newcastle, which had been steadily worsening. Pitt's own retirement paved the way for Bute's appointment as virtual head of the ministry.

There was relatively little change in the ministry's policy, either in relation to the conduct of war or the peace negotiations.

<sup>1</sup> Bute's wife, a Wortley Montagu, later inherited a fortune, part of which went to found the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.

### *George III and 'Personal Rule'*

Bute was not in the ministry as the leader of the peace party as much as the King's successor to Pitt, albeit a somewhat mediocre one<sup>1</sup>. This prepared the way for the fall of Newcastle, the leader of the Whig group which Bute and George III had long ago christened the 'imprisoners of royal authority.' Newcastle was eager for peace and commented acidly on his new colleagues; 'They breathe war,' he said of them, 'as much as Mr. Pitt did.' Before long, disagreement within the Cabinet led to his fall. 'There never was such an instance of cruelty and barbarity,' the Duke characteristically wailed, 'nor was a man who had it in his power to serve, to make, to choose so great a part of the members of both Houses, so abandoned as I am at present,' But George thought otherwise; 'As to the D. of N——,' he wrote to Bute, 'I have sent the whole of his conduct already, nothing now remains but the ending of that d—— ministry as soon as possible.'

Yet Bute's administration only lasted a few months. Although the peace negotiations which had become its principal business shewed that Bute had some ability as a diplomat, his unpopularity increased daily. The opposition, divided as it was, made the most of its chances to discredit a minister who had brought about its downfall. The people were disappointed with the terms of the Treaty of Paris, which had been denounced vigorously by the popular hero, Pitt. They suspected a royal favourite and, what made it so much worse, a Scotsman. His life became utterly miserable, for his ministry was divided, his coach was attacked, and the windows of his house were broken, while the rabble sang bawdy songs outside his town residence. Wilkes attacked him in prose in the *North Briton* and Charles Churchill in verse. His opponents in Parliament schemed against him from Wildman's tavern in Albemarle Street. The unhappy nobleman, who was also burdened by poor health, wrote hysterically to the King in January, 1763, 'having done my duty,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the remark made by the Prince of Wales that Bute would make 'an excellent ambassador in any court where there was nothing to do.' The remark is unjust but it at least suggests what most people recognised, that he had little capacity for politics.

### *George Grenville*

and stood the hour of peril, every wish of heart, every faculty of my mind, and every sense I am indow'd with, call loud upon me to retire in quiet, and pass the autumnal part of life, unruff'd by the little infamous scenes, the black ingratitude . . . that decorates every hour of my present situation.' He could retire, comforted by the realisation that he had fulfilled his duty to the King by bringing the ship of state into harbour, so that, in his own words, 'it could be handed over to a freshwater pilot'

But his influence did not end with his resignation. For some time, the friendship was as intimate as ever and his letters to the King formed a perpetual source of irritation to the ministries in power. But gradually the relations cooled, leading to a complete breach in 1766. Bute believed that he could persuade the King against a ministry which did not contain some representatives of his own group. George was much more concerned with trying to find a stable government. In 1766 he decided to appoint a ministry, as Bute had advised him, with Pitt at its head, but he did not consult Bute after he had made this decision nor did he include any of his friends in the new government. The affront brought the friendship to a close.

This is to anticipate. The King's position in 1763 was awkward because the choice of possible ministers remained very limited. The new leading minister, George Grenville, was Pitt's brother-in-law. Although he had some understanding of finance and politics, he was also a self-opinionated, unattractive bore. The personnel of the new administration remained practically unchanged. Grenville had been horrified at Pitt's war expenditure and the policy which he followed during the next two years was mainly moulded by his determination to place the country's finances on a sounder footing.

The policy of retrenchment caused Grenville's fall. For it brought about the Sugar Act of 1764 and the Stamp Act of 1765, both of which led to trouble in the colonies and dissatisfaction at home. He also had the misfortune to deal with the Wilkes case. Nor, if he lacked the confidence of the country, did the 'gentle Shepherd,' as Pitt irreverently called him, have the trust

### *George III and 'Personal Rule'*

of the King 'Ingratitude and undoubted desires,' George told Bute, 'are the characteristicks of my present, and I am sure future Ministers . . . but thank God I have a friend [i.e. Bute] and that is what few Princes can boast of except myself, that comforts me and makes me look on my Ministers as tools solely in my public capacity.' Early in 1765 the King had the first of those mysterious diseases, then represented as pimples and oppression on the chest, symptomatic of what finally became insanity. The fear that the disease might recur made a bill for a possible Regency necessary. George was exasperated by the omission of the Princess-mother from the bill, and determined to rid himself of a minister whose long-winded speeches bored him to tears. 'When he has wearied me for two hours, he looks at his watch to see if he may not tire me for an hour more.' The King blamed Grenville for the troubles in the American colonies and the failure to deal effectively with Wilkes. 'I would rather see the devil in my closet,' he said later, 'than Mr. Grenville'

Happily, he was not compelled to accept the alternative. In this dilemma he turned to the Whig clique headed by the Marquis of Rockingham, an easy-going lover of the turf, rich, with a rather vague idealism permeating his somewhat obtuse mind. The King described the group in a letter to his uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, as 'Men who have principles and therefore cannot approve of seeing the Crown dictated to by low men.' The weakness of the new ministry made it fairly certain that its life would be short, but, as Grenville had forfeited the King's confidence and lost the support of the trading classes, there was no alternative but Rockingham (except Pitt, who, eager as he was to comply with the King's request, as yet found it impossible to form a ministry) But Rockingham was unimportant as a leader; Gower summed him up by remarking to the rakish Sandwich 'How could you worry the poor dumb creature so?' The 'poor dumb creature's' administration provided an excellent illustration of the looseness of the boundaries dividing the political parties, for his ministry was quite as much a 'tesselated

### *The Return of Pitt*

pavement' of Whigs and Tories as the ministry which followed. The First Lord had a strong enough following in the Commons to secure the repeal of the Stamp Act, but the Cabinet was too split internally to be anything more than, as Charles Townshend phrased it, 'a lutestring ministry fit only for summer wear.' Above all, Rockingham lacked the King's confidence. The time-servers soon made haste to leave the sinking ship in the knowledge that negotiations with Pitt had been reopened and were proceeding satisfactorily 'On the D of Grafton's retiring,' the King wrote, 'I immediately turn'd my thoughts how an effective Ministry could be formed, and secondly, how I could in the best method dissolve the present Administration.' Once more George III was able to rid himself of a ministry with which he had little in common.

Negotiations with Pitt had been proceeding for some time. Bute had approached him just before his own ministry closed, but Pitt was touchy and refused to support the government against Wilkes. 'Well, Mr. Pitt,' said the King, 'I see this won't do. My honour is concerned and I must support it.' Pitt replied: 'Sir, the House of Commons will not force me upon your Majesty, and I will never come into your service against your consent' Two further approaches were made, both of which failed, before Pitt finally agreed to take office. 'Your very dutiful and handsome conduct,' the King told him in July, 1766, 'the last summer makes me desirous of having your thoughts how an able and dignified ministry may be formed. I desire therefore, you will come, for this salutary purpose, to town.'

There was much to be said in favour of the new ministry. Pitt was as popular as he had ever been, and his re-entry into office might bring the King the popular support he needed. Furthermore, Pitt disliked the Whig oligarchy as greatly as George III and had long asserted that the country's troubles had been caused by their policy. Nor was Pitt bound to any special clique or group of parties. Finally, he revered the Crown; 'he bowed so low to the King,' said one observer, 'that his great nose appeared between his legs' In one of the last confidential letters

### *George III and 'Personal Rule'*

that he wrote to Bute, George referred in a revealing way to the political situation on the eve of Pitt's appointment: 'My D. Friend will easily conceive that I am now in a state of great agitation, as my attempts have so often proved fruitless. . . . I now hope God is giving me this line to extricate this Country out of faction.' On Pitt's side, there were also favourable factors. He liked office and wanted the King's trust. He was supremely self-confident that he could restore the country's prestige and repair the damage done by previous administrations.

But the hopes of King and minister were doomed to fail. Pitt's acceptance of the earldom of Chatham lost him popularity in the country; it seemed to many as if the King had purchased him with a peerage. 'My Lord,' wrote Major Corry from Ireland, 'I will be plain and honest with you and tell you numbers of the first people here are displeased at your accepting of a peerage, as you could not be more honourable than you were.' Friend and foe alike accepted the rather sinister implications of the popular rhyme

Here dead to fame lies Patriot Will,  
His monument his seat;  
His titles are his epitaph,  
His robes his winding sheet.

By removing the ministry's ablest orator from the Commons, George at once endangered the administration. It is nevertheless possible to understand Chatham's action. He believed that he would be far more useful to the King and his colleagues in the Lords because the leading representatives of the pernicious Whig oligarchy sat in the Upper House.

This was not the only initial mistake he made. Burke's well-known rhodomontade about an administration, 'checkered and speckled; a piece of joinery crossly indented and whimsically dovetailed; a tessellated pavement without cement,' had some foundation in fact. Pitt had great difficulty in getting together a ministry which would collaborate with him, partly because his increasing irritability and lack of tact made him an extremely difficult colleague. The ablest member of the Cabinet, apart

### *Chatham's Measures*

from Chatham and Shelburne, was young Charles Townshend. 'Champagne Charley' was gay, dissolute and infinitely attractive—the delight and ornament of this House, and the charm of every private society which he honoured with his presence,' was Burke's tribute—but he was also unreliable and unprincipled. This coalition of personalities was bound together by loyalty to the King rather than by principle, although Chatham might have been able to have held the ministry together if his health had been better.

The success of his policy, even given his health, was purely supposititious. As before, he was more interested in what was happening abroad than in domestic policy. 'France is still,' he said, 'the object of my mind whenever thought calls me back to a world infatuated, bewitched' He argued that the generosity of the terms of the Treaty of Paris had given the two Bourbon powers, France and Spain, an opportunity to recover, and that they were only waiting an occasion to renew their attack on an empire whose armaments had been weakened and whose foreign policy had been unrealistic during the past six years. He at once tried to improve the country's fortifications and to increase the strength and efficiency of the Navy. He also took measures to check French encroachments overseas by ordering an expedition to establish British claims to the Falkland Islands, and by seeing that Pensacola in Florida was properly fortified for possible use as a base against the French and Spaniards in the West Indies. British diplomats were instructed to reach friendly understandings with Frederick of Prussia and Catherine of Russia. There was only an apathetic response to these overtures as Frederick was much more interested in reconstructing Prussian economy, and mindful of what he chose to regard as Britain's betrayal in 1762. Both he and Catherine were also far more concerned with the future of Poland than with a British war against France. Initially, there was thus very little reassuring in Chatham's foreign policy.

In any case the collapse of his health presaged the disintegration of his cherished schemes. The poison from the gout which



### *George III and 'Personal Rule'*

had dogged him throughout his career was now diffused throughout his system, and this, coupled with Bright's disease, caused a complete mental and physical breakdown. His conduct became erratic, to the point of madness. At one moment he was ordering the addition of thirty-four bedrooms to North End House. A month later (May, 1767), he felt that he would never recover his health unless he re-purchased his former house, Hayes, for which he had to pay nearly £6,000 more than he had a few months previously received for it. Under the careful supervision of his devoted wife, Lady Hester, the great statesman crept back slowly into political life, like a wraith from another world.

Chatham did not resign until October, 1768, but his membership of the Cabinet was purely nominal after February, 1767. Bereft of his forceful personality, it was rudderless as well as disunited. It followed that the policies and principles for which Chatham stood receded into the background and were replaced by a form of frequently misplaced ministerial opportunism. This was especially true of the ministry's attitude to the American colonies, where Charles Townshend appeared as the presiding 'evil genius'. Nor did the situation improve after Townshend's premature death; the duties which he had imposed on goods entering the colonies had already provoked the spate of indignation that was to lead to the Boston Tea Party. Without Chatham, the Cabinet was led by the amiable Duke of Grafton, who soon realised the difficulties of his task. There was widespread discontent at home caused by the Wilkes Case, and by the satirical criticism of the letters of 'Junius'. From the purely economic point of view, there was an outbreak of distemper among 'horned cattle,' causing dissatisfaction among the farming community. Quite apart from the American tumults, numerous problems faced a Cabinet in process of disintegration, leading finally to Grafton's resignation on January 28th, 1770.

For the next twelve years, George III had a Prime Minister after his own heart in Lord North, who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer since Townshend's death in 1767. North has

### *Lord North*

had a bad press, partly because his supporters seem inept and incoherent in the face of the sonorous declamations of Burke against court influence and the King's friends, partly because the Wilkes business at home and the disasters in America were attributed to him. Such condemnation is not wholly deserved. The new minister was a friendly nobleman who knew a good deal about finance and was, under a cloak of somnolence and genial sarcasm, not without intelligence and understanding. His chief fault was mental indolence, which prevented him from putting forward his own opinions on affairs when his views conflicted with those of his royal master. Although the Fox-North coalition of 1783 suggests that his subordination to the royal wishes has been over-emphasised, there is no doubt that North's chief failing was his inability to follow his own inclinations at decisive moments. His personal attraction cannot excuse what later amounted to political incompetence.

The Cabinet over which he presided, as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, was very similar in character and personnel to other ministries of the time, neither better nor worse than most. It is as well to emphasise this because the ministry has been more severely criticised than any other government in the eighteenth century. The opposition which faced it was still divided, there was no focus like Leicester House around which the different groups could converge. Chatham occasionally visited the Upper House to indulge in criticism, often profound, always histrionic, but he was now a lonely figure with no real following. The great statesman, emaciated by ill-health, had only recently been dismissed by 'Junius' as a 'lunatic brandishing a crutch'. The Rockingham Whigs had a challenging representative in Edmund Burke, now at the height of his powers, but eloquence unsupported by personality is a somewhat impotent weapon, and his words had greater influence over posterity than over his contemporaries. Nor was his programme of economical reform and conciliation in America really popular in Parliament or the country. Another opponent of the ministry, Shelburne, was an isolated figure,

### *George III and 'Personal Rule'*

distrusted in all quarters of both Houses George III had then excellent reasons for retaining North in office for so long a period; there was no one, in the opposition or in his own party, who could replace him satisfactorily or carry out his work so well.

### *3. Wilkes and 'Liberty'*

Since John Wilkes had criticised the royal speech in No. 45 of the *North Briton*, hardly a year had elapsed in which each of the governments between 1760 and 1780 had not been faced with some problem relating to him. Wilkes was important because he represented, to some extent unconsciously, much inarticulate but none the less real discontent in the country. His pose was made on behalf of democratic forces which were gradually moving towards the structure of government itself. He only perceived this in a vague way, but this does not invalidate the significance of his stand. If the story of his life has some interest, its importance is confined to those things which he represented. It is in this sense that he deserves his place in the history of eighteenth-century England. He was a signpost pointing to a whole series of tendencies which led eventually to the Great Reform Bill and the creation of Victorian democracy.

And this is both singular and ironical, for the man who made so gallant a stand on behalf of liberty, was a typical rakish hanger-on of contemporary society, undisciplined, egotistical and immoral. Downright ugly in appearance, there was something infinitely attractive about him—he required, he said, only 'half an hour to talk away my face'—which gave him great influence over men and women. Son of a wealthy distiller, he had studied at Leyden University and acquired the polished and profligate manners of high society. On his return home, he married a girl twelve years older than himself; as he said later, the marriage was contracted to 'please an indulgent Father. . . . It was a sacrifice to Plutus [Mrs. Wilkes's father was a wealthy dry-salter], not to Venus.' He was soon involved in the activities of a group

### *John Wilkes*

of lascivious young bucks headed by the member of Parliament for Aylesbury, Thomas Potter, son of a former Archbishop. Potter introduced Wilkes to the Grenvilles and later secured (at the trifling cost of £7,000) his election as member of Parliament for the same constituency as himself. So far—and indeed from now to the day of his death—Wilkes's private life is largely a study in salacity and dishonour. He parted from his wife and was soon a prominent member of the riotous and dissipated 'Brethren' of Medmenham Abbey. His extravagance caused him to squander his wife's money and landed him in debt. He was naturally a member of the Grenvillite group opposed to Bute, but there was no sign that he was as yet concerned with the principles of politics. He was much more interested in seeing what he could get out of them; even on the eve of his slashing attack on the government he was trying to secure an appointment to the embassy at Constantinople, an environment which might well have suited his morals.

His opposition to Bute brought him into the limelight. The *North Briton*<sup>1</sup> had been started under the aegis of Wilkes and Charles Churchill on June 6th, 1762. It opened on a challenge; '*The Liberty of the Press is the birthright of a Briton, and is justly esteemed the finest bulwark of the liberties of the country,*' and had already led to a duel between Wilkes and Lord Talbot.<sup>2</sup> The paper was one of a number, usually scurrilous and short-lived, which had been started to bring about the downfall of the government. No. 45, published on April 23rd, 1763, criticised the speech from the throne: 'Every friend of his country must lament that a prince of so many great and amiable qualities . . . can be brought to give the sanction of his sacred name to the most odious measures, and to the most unjustifiable public declamation from a throne ever renowned for truth, honour and unsullied virtue.' The ministers were described as 'tools of

<sup>1</sup> The title had been selected as a reply to Smollett's *The Briton*.

<sup>2</sup> Talbot had been Lord High Steward at the Coronation of George III. His horse, which had been schooled to back out of the royal presence, had entered in reverse. The *North Briton* ridiculed the incident.

### *George III and 'Personal Rule'*

despotism and corruption,' who 'have sent the spirit of discord through the land.' The government decided to proceed against the *North Briton* by means of a general warrant which was issued a week later, April 30th, 1763.

The first public cause which Wilkes represented was the defence of the people against general warrants. After the Licensing Act had expired in 1695, the Secretary of State was empowered to issue a warrant to search for and seize papers seditious or otherwise objectionable and to arrest their authors, printers and publishers. The warrant used was called a general warrant because the names of the persons to be arrested were not mentioned specifically in the document. This was obviously liable to abuse because it enabled a government to stifle criticism, which it had no legitimate right to do under the ordinary process of law. Thus Lord Halifax, the Secretary of State, issued a warrant 'against the authors, printers and publishers of the *North Briton*, No. 45.' 'I asked,' says Wilkes himself, 'why he should serve it [i.e. the general warrant] on me, rather than on the Lord Chancellor, or either of the Secretaries, or Lord Bute . . . or my next-door neighbour.' At last he insisted on being conveyed in a sedan-chair to attract attention, which was the more marked as he lived in the same street, Great George Street, Westminster, as Lord Halifax himself. Brought before Halifax, he was 'very impertinent, said he had refus'd to come and that violence alone had brought him and that he would say nothing' He was committed to the Tower, where he lived in comfort and received visitors, while his house was searched for papers.

The keynote to the pose which Wilkes was making is provided by the words 'the liberty of all peers and gentlemen, and what touches me more sensibly, that of all the middling and inferior set of people, who stand most in need of protection, is in my case this day to be finally decided upon: a question of such importance as to determine at once whether English liberty shall be a reality or a shadow.' The Lord Chief Justice, Pratt, freed Wilkes on the ground that his imprisonment constituted a breach of his privileges as a member of Parliament. As soon as he

returned home, Wilkes wrote a letter to the Secretaries asking them to restore the goods which had been taken from his house. They replied that he had published 'infamous and seditious libels' which would form the basis of a future prosecution by the Attorney-General and that his papers were kept for that object. In the meantime, he brought an action against Halifax's agent, Under-Secretary Wood, for unlawful trespass.

The Cabinet was now convinced that its prestige would suffer if Wilkes was not brought to book. 'The continuation of Wilkes's impudence,' George III wrote to Grenville, 'is amazing, when his ruin is so near.' Two charges were prepared to prevent him from availing himself of his privileges as an M P. As soon as Parliament met on November 15th, the Commons voted (by 237 to 111 votes) that No. 45 of the *North Briton* was a 'false, scandalous and seditious libel.' To make Wilkes's disgrace the more certain, the Cabinet denounced him for having libelled the erudite but controversial Bishop Warburton of Gloucester, in the *Essay on Woman*. The latter was a singularly obscene publication, probably composed by Thomas Potter in collaboration with Wilkes, for private circulation among their friends. It was a parody of Pope's *Essay on Man* which Warburton had edited.

While these events were leading to a further crisis in Wilkes's career as a champion of liberty, the first issue for which he had fought had been decided in his favour. The decision in Wood's case brought him a welcome windfall of £1,000 damages and a declaration that general warrants of the kind issued by Halifax were 'unconstitutional, illegal and absolutely void'. This judgment had far more than a purely personal importance since it formed a precedent for the later decisions in the cases of *Leach v. Money* (1765) and *Entick v. Carrington* (1765), and so helped to secure the just rights and liberty of the people. Thus, even if Wilkes's denial of the legality of general warrants had been an accident of history, the accident had given rise to a series of events which upheld the sovereignty of the law against powers which verged on tyranny and absolutism.

After the action which the Commons had taken (of declaring

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that cases of seditious libel were not covered by parliamentary privilege) Wilkes left for Paris. He did not return when Parliament re-assembled at the beginning of the next year. The Commons thereupon voted his expulsion while Lord Mansfield shortly after entered judgment against him in the cases of the *North Briton* and the *Essay on Woman*. There are various points to be made here. Firstly, there was little to be said from the personal angle in defence of Wilkes. Even if he was really ill, he should have returned to England as soon as he recovered instead of passing the time in dalliance with lady friends. On the other hand, the Commons' action was a breach of the conventions of the British Constitution and another subtly-envenomed dart against the liberty of the subject. They had the right to determine who were and who were not members of Parliament, but it was unfair to condemn a man unheard. Wilkes was by now very popular with the masses. He was the defender of the rights of the ordinary member of Parliament against a hostile majority and the liberties of the subject against a tyrannous oligarchy. A club which met at the Rose and Crown tavern in Wapping told him (May 19th, 1763), that they had sworn to get drunk every year on his birthday in commemoration of his release from the Tower of London, and they were writing to ask him for its date. If they remained ignorant, they 'must either get drunk every day for twelve months or be perjured and d . . . d.'

While Wilkes remained in France, Grenville gave way to Rockingham, and the latter in his turn to Chatham and Grafton. As a former friend of Temple, Wilkes hoped for better treatment from the two last-named ministers and was angered by their neglect. Tiring of exile, he decided to appeal to public opinion by becoming a candidate in a by-election for the City of London. He hoped that his election would save him from the penalties of the sentence of outlawry which had been passed against him. He was, however, placed at the bottom of the poll; shortly after this failure, his name appeared as a candidate in the Middlesex by-election.

His election as an M.P. for Middlesex (1768) opened another

### *The Middlesex Election*

chapter in Wilkes's life as a study in democratic development. He became the champion of the rights of the electors to choose their own representatives. As soon as he knew that he had been successful, he surrendered himself to the legal officers. Mansfield acquitted him of outlawry on a technical point, but sentenced him to a fine of £500 and twenty-two months' imprisonment on the previous charges. The sentence greatly increased his popularity, the result of the election had led to great rejoicing. 'No 45' became so ubiquitous a symbol that the Austrian ambassador had had to submit to the indignity of having his coach stopped so that '45' could be chalked on the soles of his boots. Wilkes's imprisonment caused ugly rioting which brought the soldiery into conflict with the London mob. Wilkes made good use of the 'Massacre' of St George's Fields to attack the government and to encourage further popular feeling in his favour.

That this popular feeling can be regarded as an accurate gauge of democratic opinion, despite the irrational and corrupt impulses which led to rioting, the Commons' reaction to Wilkes's election and subsequent sentence clearly illustrates. They voted that Wilkes should be expelled from the House for writing and printing the attack on the government which asserted their responsibility for the St. George's 'Massacre.' This was a challenge which the Middlesex electors accepted and determined to reject, for not only did they subsequently return Wilkes to the House three times (and as many times he was expelled) but they also elected his supporter, Serjeant Glynn, as their other representative. In the last of these elections, the government candidate was Colonel Luttrell, a man as wanting in personal respectability as Wilkes himself. Although he only secured 296 votes in contrast to the 1,143 votes given for Wilkes, the Commons declared that he was the duly-returned member. The Commons' action was a clear defiance of the wishes of the Middlesex electorate and so made a travesty of their claim to be a representative body.

Wilkes now emerged as the champion of another popular



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cause The American colonists, whose cause he had supported, were particularly appreciative; money (to pay his debts) and gifts were sent by the popular assemblies despite the Governors' disapproval. The New York radical, Alexander McDougall, adopted the familiar '45' as the cherished sign of liberty on the other side of the Atlantic. The *Boston Gazette* of February 26th, 1770, recorded that twelve days earlier, the 'Forty-fifth Day of the Year, forty-five gentlemen, real Enemies to internal Taxation, by, or in Obedience to external Authority, and cordial Friends of American Liberty, went in decent Procession to the New Gaol, and dined with him [i.e. McDougall] on Forty-five pounds of Beef Stakes, cut from a Bullock of Forty-five Months old'. Wilkes was equally popular in London, he was elected an Alderman, made Master of the Joiners' Company, became High Sheriff and, after some failures, Lord Mayor. In Parliament, Chatham declared that the Commons' action was inexcusable and a breach of their representative character.

Meanwhile, Wilkes continued to appear as the champion of democratic rights, this time in defence of the claim of the press to report parliamentary debates. Two printers who had been denounced for publishing reports of the Commons' debates surrendered to the City authorities, were brought before and discharged by Alderman Wilkes and another magistrate. Enraged by the City's insolence, the Commons ordered the committal of the Lord Mayor, Brass Crosby and another magistrate to the Tower and summoned Wilkes to appear before the bar of the House, in vain. The London mob again rioted, and the whole procedure was so futile and farcical that the House never again tried to interfere with the freedom of reporting its debates.

When Wilkes finally took his seat in the House he played a less prominent part in debates than might have been expected. But he remained as vehement a champion of popular causes in Parliament as he had been outside it. He spoke repeatedly in praise of the cause for which the American colonists were fighting. He affirmed that taxation without representation was unjust and ended prophetically, 'who knows whether in consequence of this

### *The Importance of Wilkes*

day's violent and mad address—whether in a few years the *independent* Americans may not celebrate the glorious era of the revolution of 1775 as we do that of 1688 ?' In other speeches he asked that Parliament should be reformed so that it might become more truly representative of the people, and supported pleas for further toleration of Roman Catholics and Dissenters. The genial tolerance for which he stood received its greatest shock when the London mob, under the encouragement of the mad Lord George Gordon, rose in 1780 against the Roman Catholics and proceeded to burn, loot and pillage their property. Wilkes took a leading part in suppressing disorder and subsequently lost some of his popularity with the Londoners.

After 1780 there is a sense of anti-climax in his career, which continues until his death in 1797. He remained as great a libertine as ever, but his earlier enthusiasms waned or even disappeared altogether. He appeared at Court and chatted amicably with the King whom he had once so despised. Once, it is said, on his journey to his villa at Sandown in the Isle of Wight, an old woman cheered him with 'Wilkes and Liberty,' to which the champion of the people replied, 'Be quiet, you old fool. That's all over long ago.'

This gives rise to the final question of Wilkes's sincerity and his general importance. He was a cynically-minded man, even his introduction into the Bacchanalian revels at Medmenham caused some disquiet among the brethren. It is curious that so vicious, if attractive, a character should emerge as a champion of liberty. Was he a radical demagogue for his own ends? It is true, to use his own words, that 'accident made him a patriot,' but there nevertheless seems to have been a broad streak of genuine humanity and a real love of democracy beneath the pose, and actuality, of a selfish libertine. His association with so many causes which have been of intimate importance in the history of democratic development makes his political sincerity unquestionable. As age crept on he was prone to discard the principles which had made him into a public hero, but this does not invalidate the initial assumption that he was a sincere lover of political

### George III and 'Personal Rule'

liberty. There was something about this rather attractive demagogue which makes him, incorrigibly selfish as he was, into a shrewd and intelligent democrat. Personal issues apart, his significance in British history is clear; it was he who brought about the end of general warrants, who maintained the privileges of Parliament, who stood up for its representative character, who upheld the American colonists and who maintained the liberty of the press. This is no mean achievement. In this sense, no more fitting words could have been engraved on the plate of his coffin than those which he had himself suggested: 'the remains of John Wilkes, a friend to liberty.'

#### 4. Edmund Burke

If Wilkes was the popular opponent of George III's ministries, Edmund Burke was their leading critic in the Commons. Yet it was as a political philosopher rather than as a practical politician that Burke was outstanding. His career was relatively unimportant. Born at Dublin in 1729, he went to Trinity College, Dublin, studied for the law and had a well-established literary reputation before he became Secretary to Lord Rockingham in 1765. He entered Parliament, where his skill as an orator attracted attention, and became the semi-official representative of the Whig group led by Rockingham, publishing the best-known of his early writings, *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents*, in 1770. In 1780 he put forward his plan for the abolition of sinecures in his *Plan of Economic Reform*, which led eventually to the passing of the important Civil Establishment Act of 1782. He took office once more after 1782, in the Fox-North ministry of 1783. He was now chiefly concerned (1785-86) in bringing Warren Hastings to judgment. The trial, which lasted seven years (1788-1795), revealed Burke's mastery of the English language. Before the indictment had ended, the French Revolution had broken out. This event seemed to Burke to strike at the very foundations of society, and he poured forth

### *Edmund Burke*

his thoughts in the *Reflections* which incidentally regained him the approval of King and Court, which his previous strictures on the government had lost. In 1794 Burke was granted a civil-list pension of £1,200 a year, but he did not live long to enjoy it, dying on Sunday, July 9th, 1797.

So much for a brief summary of Burke's career. It was as an orator that contemporaries admired him. The sonorous, rounded periods of his speeches, the wealth of information they provided, the logic and clarity of his thought made him a master among his contemporaries. But oratory rarely sways, there were occasions on which Burke's rising from his seat led to a scurry towards the door. The majority of the members had no love for him. There was indeed a curious hiatus between his principles and his political practice which may partly explain this, he sought to secure sinecures for his son, Richard, the survivorship to the office of Receiver-General of the Land Revenues of Essex and, unsuccessfully, the Clerkship of the Pells, while he was bringing forward his plan of Economic Reform. 'Can one,' Horace Walpole exclaimed, 'but smile at the reformer of abuses reserving the second greatest abuse to himself?' Perhaps the real reason for Burke's failure to win over the Commons was that he always really remained an outsider. He was an Irishman of rather obscure social origins who was only superficially admitted to the intimacy of the great lords whose policy he represented so brilliantly.

Although Burke was not what we should ordinarily call a religious man, religion lay at the root of his political thought. 'We are,' he said, 'all born in subjection . . . to one great, immutable, pre-existent Law, prior to all our devices, and prior to all our contrivances, paramount to all our ideas, and all our sensations, antecedent to our very existence, by which we are knit and connected in the Eternal frame of the Universe, out of which we cannot stir . . .' This divine Natural Law is the source of all true growth and all real political development. Thus the British Constitution, perfectly embodying the traditions of the past, has the sanction of religion. For the state is a partnership:

### *George III and 'Personal Rule'*

'As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born' In other words, the State as an institution is an aspect of divine creation, intimately connected with the 'source and original archetype of all perfection' 'He who gave our nature to be perfected by our virtue willed also the necessary means of its perfection, He willed therefore the state'

If the state is therefore organic, all constitutional change is suspect; 'unprincipled facility of changing the state as often and as much, and in as many ways as there are floating fancies or fashions' is irreligious as well as impolitic. 'A spirit of innovation,' he wrote with reference to the French Revolution, 'is generally the result of a selfish temper, and confined views. People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors.' Burke was therefore completely opposed to any change that would radically alter the existing system of representation. 'It is,' he said, 'a constitution whose sole authority is that it has existed time out of mind'

Yet it was necessary to eliminate abuses which might mar the Constitution. In his *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents* he tried to show how the power of faction used by the Crown and the distribution of useless sinecures were upsetting the balance of the British Constitution The Crown sought to regain its ancient powers by forming a party of King's Friends. 'The power of the Crown, almost dead and rotten as Prerogative, has grown up anew, with much more strength, and far less odium, under the name of influence.' This 'influence' has been utilised to estrange the ministers from Parliament, and Parliament from the nation; it rested on royal support and the corrupt use of patronage 'To get rid of all this intermediate and independent importance,' he wrote in his analysis of the situation, 'and to secure to the court the unlimited and uncontrolled use of its own vast influence, under the sole direction of its own private favour has for some years past been the great object of policy.'

### *Burke and the Constitution*

How was this situation, a situation which Burke incidentally misinterpreted, to be remedied and how was the Constitution to be restored to its pristine purity? Much could be done by the abolition of useless offices, by the sale of crown land, reform of the pension list and abolition of separate jurisdictions, all proposals included in his plan of Economic Reform. But the problem was fundamentally more moral than purely political in its nature. It is for each individual to develop his own political conscience, so that every government rests on an educated public opinion. 'When the ministry rests upon public opinion, it is not indeed built upon a rock of adamant; it has, however, some stability. But when it stands upon private humour, its structure is of rubble, and its foundation is on quicksand.' Above all, the state can be saved from the abuses of a tyrant or the native corruptions of a democracy by its natural guardians, the true aristocracy. It is the function of this aristocracy to act as the trustees of the state and to check all attempts at arbitrary power. Although Burke would not necessarily have identified the English House of Lords with his aristocracy, his own friendship with some of the more idealistic peers made him incline to this view. 'You,' he wrote to the Duke of Richmond, 'if you are what you ought to be, are in my eye the great oaks that shade a country and perpetuate your benefits from generation to generation. The immediate power of a Duke of Richmond or a Marquis of Rockingham is not so much of moment, but if their conduct and example hand down their principles to their successors, then their houses become the public repositories and offices of record for the constitution.' Thus, 'when the poor rise to destroy the rich, they act as wisely for their own purposes as when they burn mills, and throw corn into the river to make bread cheap.'

To this must be added Burke's emphasis on party as opposed to faction. A faction was a self-interested intriguing group whereas a party was a 'body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed.' Party that is deeply rooted

### *George III and 'Personal Rule'*

in past history and nature often brings out what is best in men, spurring them on to work for the common weal instead of for a selfish faction. 'Dispositions that are lovely in private life' are carried through party into the life of the nation itself

If Burke was mainly concerned with protecting the Constitution against abuse, he applied the same ideas to a series of other issues, in his speeches on the American problem, on Ireland, on the impeachment of Warren Hastings and against the French Revolution. In each case he applied his fundamental principles to particular situations, 'seeking ever to illuminate facts by principles'. Starting from the same initial premise, that there is a Natural Law governing men's actions, he was led to condemn the tyranny of the 'King's Friends' in England, to sympathise with the rebels in America, to attack the domination of the Protestant clique in Dublin, the autocratic proceedings of one man in India and the passions of mob rule in France.

His sympathy with the American colonists sprang from his belief that the Americans were what they were because of their British ancestry. Could Englishmen stand by indifferently while Americans fought the same battles as they themselves had fought in the seventeenth century? 'The feelings of the colonies,' he said in 1774, 'were formerly the feelings of Great Britain. Theirs was formerly the feelings of Mr Hampden when called upon for the payment of twenty shillings. Would twenty shillings have ruined Mr. Hampden's fortunes? No! but the payment of half twenty shillings would have made him a slave. It is the weight of the preamble, of which you are so fond, and not the weight of the duty, that the Americans are unable and unwilling to bear.' If this is so, then, as he said in a speech the next year, 'An Englishman is the unfittest person on earth to argue another Englishman into slavery,' and nature and policy alike demand a reconciliation. 'When I consider that we have colonies for no purpose but to be serviceable to us, it seems to my poor understanding a little preposterous to make them unserviceable, in order to keep them obedient.' Repression is the worst way of solving the problem. 'Magnanimity in politics,' he said

### *Burke and the Colomes*

in a splendid phrase, 'is not seldom the truest wisdom, and a great empire and little minds go ill together' 'Again and again and again revert to our own principles—leave America, if she has taxable matter in her, to tax herself . . . Be content to bind America by laws of trade; you have always done it . . . Do not burthen them with taxes.' Or again, 'The question with me is, not whether you have a right to render your people miserable, but whether it is not your interest to make them happy . . . Is a politic act the worse for being a generous one?' With these and other arguments Burke appealed for conciliation—in vain

It was with the same detestation for tyranny that Burke attacked British rule in Ireland and Warren Hastings' conduct in India. Speaking from personal experience, he emphasised the debt which the English owed the Irish; 'Ireland has never made a single step in its progress towards prosperity by which you have not had a share, and perhaps the greatest share, in the benefit' It was therefore to England's interest to free Ireland's trade from its complete subordination to the mercantile interests of Britain, to give Ireland an independent Parliament and to forward Roman Catholic Emancipation. In another part of the world Warren Hastings had stained Britain's good name through mis-directed ambitions and selfish intentions. 'He has arbitrary power,' he said in an important speech on the fourth day of the trial, 'my lords, the East India Company have not arbitrary power to give him; your lordships have not, nor the Commons; nor the whole legislature.' What made the whole problem so much worse in Burke's eyes was the fact that Hastings had proved so bad an advertisement for the essential genius of British rule. His indictment was vituperative, bitingly unfair, even on the evidence at his disposal, but it nevertheless represented the idealism which gave so fanatic a force to his speeches

The same combination of emotion, imagination and logic made him a determined foe of the French Revolution. The French had appealed to an abstract body of human rights for which there were no grounds in history or religion. This constituted



### *George III and 'Personal Rule'*

a denial of the Natural Law on which all his theories of government rested. What wonder then that the French had abandoned the sanctions of morality and religion? France had become a 'Cannibal Republic,' degraded by every step she took from the brotherhood of nations, inhabited by villains 'whose maxims poison more than the exhalations of the most deadly fens and who turn all the fertilities of Nature and of Art into a howling wilderness'

Burke was often mistaken in his analysis of particular situations, and generally ineffective in persuading the Commons to follow his advice. This does not, however, constitute his claim to importance. Burke was significant because of his insight into the foundations of government. Rightly regarded as the father of modern Conservatism, he was no less the guardian of ordered (and some might add, tardy) constitutional development; 'Our constitution,' he said, 'stands on a nice equipoise with steep precipices and deep waters upon all sides of it. In removing it from a dangerous leaning towards one side, there may be a risk of oversetting it on the other.' His insistence on the organic nature of the State was probably the most fundamental and significant of all his ideas. Burke was then no practical politician, but he was one of the most influential thinkers of his time. 'His stream of mind is perpetual,' said Dr. Johnson. This was a just comment on the speeches and pamphlets which he produced during his long political career.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE FIRST BRITISH EMPIRE, 1714-1815

#### 1. *The conception of Empire*

The British people were unconcerned with theoretical considerations about the colonies. When their rulers formulated a colonial policy, it was normally a rationalisation of what they had learned of colonial rule as a result of their experience as politicians at Westminster or as merchants in the City. The British imperial viewpoint was strictly utilitarian, this was implicit in the manner of the colonies' foundation. Most colonial settlements, if not all, had been founded with a view to material profit, either for those who settled and developed the land or for the proprietors to whom the King granted a charter, or for the company under whose aegis the soil was planted, tilled and harvested. The companies had their headquarters in London and represented the investing capacity of an interesting cross-section of upper and middle-class society. There was thus, as the history of the East India, Africa and South Sea Companies showed, a very close commercial connection between the colonies and the mother country.

This commercial connection was mainly one-sided. The colonies were there to serve as a market for British goods, or to supply raw materials for British industries. The historic Navigation Acts of 1651 and 1660 laid down an 'enumerated' list of articles which could not be sent to foreign countries and which formed the exclusive monopoly of British trading interests. It was only as the population in the colonies increased and the march towards political and economic maturity quickened that this policy became gradually more and more unworkable. The attempts made by George III's ministries to solve the colonial

### *The First British Empire*

problem by tightening-up the old system of economic and fiscal subordination to the mother country were in themselves a measure of the way in which the original policy had ceased to be effective.

British policy was also affected by strategic considerations, principally by the long rivalry with France and Spain, both of whom had territory in the eastern and western hemispheres. War comprehended the constant conflict over the frontiers of French Canada and the British North American colonies, the bitter rivalries of the sugar islands of the West Indies, where the British islands were suffering from the wise policy followed by French governors, the struggle over the control of the slave trade of Africa, and over spheres of influence in India. It is only within the framework of the struggle for commercial and political power between the two world empires of France and Britain that colonial development can be properly understood.

Very few Englishmen realised the significance of this last point. The vagueness of colonial policy cannot be better revealed than by glancing at the nature of the control exercised by the central government over the colonies. All colonial problems came within the province of the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, he was assisted by the Board of Trade and Plantations originally established in 1696. The latter was practically quiescent until the appointment of Lord Halifax as President in 1748 when it took on new life. Two decades later, a special Secretaryship for the Colonies was created, but its holders were incompetent as administrators and generally ignorant of colonial conditions. The number of different authorities and the indefinite nature of their functions added to the difficulties of colonial government by lengthening the correspondence between colonial governors and the ministry at home.

Yet the period was of extreme importance. The colonies were growing up, steadily realising more and more the implications of economic subordination and suspicious of the re-exertion of political control. Within the imperial rivalries of the nations and the questions of defence and taxation which they involved, there was much that was to influence the colonies' development. The

## *The East India Company*

eighteenth century saw the expansion of an empire, the loss of the thirteen colonies and an attempt to consolidate control over what remained to the home country.

### *2 The expansion of the Empire India*

What in the period under review did the Empire consist of? It was decidedly various. There were the thirteen colonies of North America, the territories of the frozen North supervised by the Hudson's Bay Company, the unimportant colony of Newfoundland, and French Nova Scotia. There were many West Indian islands dotted about the Caribbean, esteemed by contemporary politicians as the most valuable of all colonial possessions. This was a debatable point as their prosperity was actually diminishing, but their commercial jealousies, especially of the North American colonies who preferred to trade with the French islands, and the strategic nature of their position, made them of first-rate importance in the history of the period. There were a few factories controlled by the Royal African Company associated with the profitable slave trade. Finally, there was the East India Company, the great trading corporation whose settlements in India afforded the most convincing illustration of trade and political rivalry in action.

The East India Company controlled three presidencies, Bombay, Calcutta (Fort William) and Madras (Fort St George) containing a score of factories and settlements. It was primarily interested in trading profits and, as yet, little concerned with the annexation of territory. Its subscribed capital amounted to £4,200,000 in 1737; its shareholders received on an average a dividend of nine per cent. Within forty years, 1708-1748, its imports and exports nearly doubled. But it was not alone in the field. Apart from the Dutch and Portuguese, the French East India Company had a number of important settlements: Pondicherry on the east coast, Chandernagore in Bengal, further south at Yanaon and at Masulipatam, and at Surat, Calicut and

### *The First British Empire*

Mahé. They had an additional advantage in the closer proximity of their island bases, Ile Bourbon (later Réunion) and Ile de France (later Mauritius), where their ships could shelter from the monsoons. The nearest British base, on the other hand, was the rocky Atlantic island of St Helena, some months' sailing away.

This commercial rivalry had political implications. The French and British colonies were tiny spots, pinlike against the vast, populous background of Hindu and Moslem peoples. Nominally, India was under the suzerainty of the Mogul Emperor, whose capital was at Delhi, but the dynasty, after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, began to fall on evil days, with the result that the Emperor's power, like that of the Holy Roman Emperor, declined in proportion to the ambition and strength of the native princes. Indian history was a checkered pattern of princely feuds and greeds behind which the millions of their subject peoples but faintly appear. The foreign factories introduced a new element into a history only very infrequently redeemed by noble impulses. For the foreigner was willing to buy and sell goods, to lease land and employ labourers; he could overawe thousands with a few hundred soldiers. His interest in the interior of India as yet seemed slight. His introduction into the interminable, internecine struggles appeared to the tortuous mind of the native prince invaluable.

But the Indian who sought their help did not realise that these trading stations were themselves merely an aspect of a great imperial struggle for riches and power. The East India Company slowly became a machine for conquering territory on behalf of a group of shareholders some thousands of miles away set against another empire engaged in a similar work. While it is unquestionable that the Indians later benefited materially and, to some degree, spiritually from the order and code of western civilisation which the British brought, it is also clear that the Indian settlements in the period under review were, apart from their commercial importance, no more than pawns in a military and political game.

Anglo-French rivalry led, then, to the acquisition of an empire.



FIG 4. India in the Eighteenth Century.

### *The First British Empire*

Whether the great Joseph Dupleix was an opportunist or not, his policy between 1741 and 1754 must be interpreted as an attempt to increase French political power in India through the manipulation of Indian politics, and attacks on the influence and authority of the British company. The French captured Madras in 1746, but were forced to return it at the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle two years later. Far more of an armistice than a peace in Asia, as in Europe, it gave Dupleix breathing space to mature his plans to consolidate French control over southern India. As a symbol of his achievements, he built a city called Dupleix Fatihabad, of which the leading feature was a high column, recording his triumphs in four languages. But his attempts to gain control by placing French puppets on the thrones of Hyderabad and the Carnatic were foiled by the superior genius of Robert Clive. Dupleix's puppet was defeated, his city was razed to the ground and the directors of the French East India Company, horrified by his extravagance, recalled him in disgrace to France in 1754.

But this only served as a prologue to the major act. Dupleix's assistant, De Bussy, trained and disciplined the native levies and intrigued to gain the goodwill of the local princes. One of these, the young Nawab Surajah-Dowlah of Bengal, attracted attention by the atrocity of the Black Hole of Calcutta, and so brought disaster on his own head through Clive's great victory at Plassey. Fighting continued in the Carnatic somewhat longer, but Eyre Coote's victory at Wandewash in 1760 marked the end of French dominion there as well. The Treaty of Paris allowed the French to retain their trading settlements as long as their fortifications were destroyed. This nullified Dupleix's dream of an imperial India under French control and at the same time laid the foundations of British rule in India.

The territory which the East India Company had almost accidentally acquired was ruled extremely badly for the first five years. The agents of the Company had never been renowned for their business morality; exile was a deadly business and its reward, if death did not intervene, a fortune with which an estate

### *Robert Clive*

could be bought on the return to England. Corruption and bribery became the order of the day. On the one hand, junior officials enriched themselves by selling *dastaks* or free customs' passes to traders who could exploit the natives, while, on the other hand, there was the weak and incompetent government of the British puppet, the Nawab, sometimes treacherous, sometimes fawning, always oppressive.

From this impasse, the Company and Bengal were once again rescued by Robert Clive. He had returned to England in 1760, wealthy, popular and influential, but he was not wholly satisfied and in June, 1764, again sailed to India, sure in the knowledge that Lawrence Sullivan, his greatest enemy, was no longer Chairman of the East India Company. 'I shall only say,' he wrote of the situation, 'that such a scene of anarchy, confusion, bribery, corruption and extortion was never seen or heard of in any country but Bengal,' and he added: 'I am determined to destroy these great and growing evils, or perish in the attempt.' What he did redounds greatly to his credit. He forbade the taking of presents from Indians and prevented the Company's servants from engaging in private trade. He effected important changes in the government of Bengal. Oudh became a buffer state. The Mogul, Shah Alam, conferred the *diwani* on the Company—i.e. the right of collecting and administering the revenues of Bengal—in return for the payment of a lump sum and the transfer of the fertile districts of Allahabad and Kora to his control. At one stroke, Clive had made the Mogul Emperor an ally and the Nawab of Bengal a pensioner of the British. Clive had done much, but he had not done enough. He returned to England in 1767, was severely criticised, and in November, 1774, committed suicide. He had in fact 'perished in the attempt.'

The government again reverted to the traditional misrule, anarchy, oppression, disorder, the corruption of the native tax-gatherers, or *zemindars*, and the Mahratta invasions, until one man came to save the country: Warren Hastings. Hastings' appointment coincided with important changes in the government of India, framed by Lord North's Regulating Act of 1773. The



### *The First British Empire*

acquisition of a vast territory had so changed the Company's functions and powers that a more precise definition was obviously needed. The new Act declared that all the Company's territory belonged to the Crown, which allowed the Company to exercise authority and to appoint the Governor-General who was to be assisted by a Council of four. The Governor-General and the Council were controlled by the Court of Directors of the Company who in their turn were supervised by the Treasury and the Secretaries of State. The Act thus instituted a form of dual control, the real authority remaining with the Company and its servants, under the general supervision of the British government.

Hastings was faced with three incredibly difficult tasks: to make this system work, to initiate radical reforms, and to defend India against French intrigues and native invaders. He found at once that the Council, and Councillor Sir Philip Francis in particular, were vehemently opposed to his rule. The Governor-General lived in simple state and walked about unattended, but he was an autocrat by nature, keener on decision and direction than on discussion and debate. If this may partly explain the antagonism, essentially the cause went deeper and mirrored the difference between Hastings' sense of responsibility and his councillors' self-centred interests. The rivalry which led eventually to his impeachment also interfered with the reforms which he wished to introduce, but he checked many financial and judicial abuses and reformed the *darwam*. His administration was reputed to be strong and just, certainly more efficient than that of any previous Governor. But he ruled under the shadow of war, the War of American Independence, which endangered the British position in India. The French, who had joined the rebellious American colonists in 1778, had found an ally in an able native prince, Hyder Ali, the Lion of Mysore, who invaded the Carnatic. Fortunately, Eyre Coote imposed a decisive defeat upon him at Porto Novo and so freed India from the possibility of another imperial struggle. But the war had increased Hastings' expenditure without increasing his revenue, indeed, it had interrupted supplies. It was this which led to Hastings' high-handed but

### *Warren Hastings*

justifiable treatment of Chayt Singh, the rich *zamindar* of Benares, and the famous affair of the Begums of Oudh, both of which formed leading articles in the impeachment. Hastings returned to England in 1785, soon to face the long series of charges prepared by Burke with such vituperative eloquence, which ended after seven years' trial in an acquittal. Although Hastings had acted high-handedly on occasions, it was clear that he had shown a greater sense of responsibility than the majority of eighteenth-century officials. And, what is even more interesting, Burke's indictment revealed that Englishmen were prepared to be disgusted at gross mismanagement and corruption which would disgrace the fair name of Britain. The younger Pitt told the Commons that Hastings had deserved well of his country and yet he was forced to add that 'though the constitution of our Eastern possessions is arbitrary and despotic, still it is the duty of every administration in that country to conduct itself by the rules of justice and of liberty as far as it is possible to reconcile them to the establishment'. Both the tradition of efficient government represented by Hastings, and of responsibility to subject peoples, embodied in the more idealistic of his opponents, affected the future administration of India and the other colonies.

The history of India between 1784 and 1815 was concerned with three significant themes, the maintenance of British commercial supremacy, the expansion of the frontiers of British India and the declining power of the East India Company. The Company had at first been primarily concerned with trade, but its newly-won territory had transformed it into a military power. This meant that the Company was obliged to concentrate on the collection of taxes, and that its officials became more important as soldiers and tax-collectors than as merchants. Paradoxically, the more powerful the Company became, the less were its profits. The East India Company had in fact become a device whereby groups of traders, covered by its patronage, were able to engage in the commerce which it monopolised. It was through this individual trade that the 'Nabobs' were able to enrich themselves. The Company's own trading revenue came chiefly from

### *The First British Empire*

China, where there was an extensive trade in tea, rather than from India itself. Between 1793 and 1810, fifty per cent. of the total sale amount of India and China goods came from the sale price of tea, but latterly even these profits were more apparent than real since they did not cover the deficit in India itself. For the Board of Directors at East India House, far removed from India itself and principally (though there were exceptions, like the Evangelical Charles Grant) concerned with the distribution of patronage, had followed a financial policy that was leading the Company nearer and nearer to bankruptcy. However great the profits of commerce, they enriched the individual rather than the Company.

Furthermore, the nature of its commitments as well as the war with the French, renewed during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, made the Company expand its territory and so spend more and more money in military ventures. Warfare against the French compelled the reduction of princes in alliance with them, while the plundering habits of native tribes on the India frontiers demanded retaliation and elimination in the interests of peaceful government and trade. Thus Cornwallis was involved in war with France's ally, Tippu Sahib of Mysore, and acquired half the prince's territory in 1792. During the Governor-Generalship of his successor, Sir John Shore (1793-1798), the Mahratta chieftains formed a close hostile block in alliance with the French. The new Governor-General, Wellesley, was as vigorous and efficient as his brother, Wellington, and at once brought the Nizam to heel, defeated Tippu Sahib (who died fighting in the streets of his capital, Seringapatam, 1799), and took over the provinces of the Carnatic, Tanjore and Oudh. This policy undoubtedly alarmed the powerful Mahratta Confederation which practically controlled the Mogul Emperor as it held his capital, Delhi. Wellesley realised that the Mahrattas aimed to drive the British out of India, and he decided to intervene before they could act together. His victories at Assaye and Argaum greatly reduced their power, but the Directors of the Company, alarmed at the cost of war and their own mounting

### *Pitt's India Act*

debts, more or less compelled his resignation in 1805. His successor, Minto, suspended Wellesley's policy but was obliged by the strategy of the world war to seize the isles of Bourbon, all of which, except Mauritius, were restored to their previous owners in 1815. This lessened the cost of Indian government but it had certain grave disadvantages, since it gave the hostile Indian tribes breathing space to prepare for further attacks and an opportunity to renew their depredations. Thus, in the years that followed the close of the Napoleonic Wars, the need for consolidating British power in India by ironing out the frontiers and so affording protection to British-ruled and friendly states became more and more apparent.

The Company's difficult finances, its growing obligations and the needs of war strategy, coupled with a sense of responsibility for the government of subject peoples at home, brought about a reduction in the authority of the East India Company and a corresponding growth in the power of the central government. The principles enunciated in North's Regulating Act of 1773 were carried a stage further in Pitt's India Act of 1784. Pitt's bill left the administration of India in the hands of the Company's servants and the distribution of patronage in the hands of the Directors, but it set up a Board of Control which could supervise the activities of the Company. It also increased the powers of the Governor-General over the other two Presidencies, and (by a supplementary act of 1793) gave him the right to disregard the majority of his Council. The Bill was designed to retain the support of the powerful East India interest without endangering the efficiency and justice of British government in India. In general, it represented the current tendency of centralising government on London, even if in this particular case considerable power was retained by the Company.

This system remained in being until 1858. It was not perfect, but under Henry Dundas, President of the Board from 1793, it worked successfully. While the commercial policy was inconsistent and the financial policy disastrous, the political administration worked tolerably well. But if the government permitted the

### *The First British Empire*

Company to enjoy to a limited extent political power, it was in no mood to let it impede Britain's developing trade. The approach to insolvency, for which the Continental Blockade must bear part of the responsibility, placed the Directors in so weak a position that they were obliged to surrender their monopoly over trade when the Charter was renewed in 1813. This was a prophetic move, twenty years later the Company lost its remaining trading privileges.

Thus a great empire had been built up in the course of the century, more by accident than design. The changing nature and extent of British rule affected the relations between the British and the Indians and had an important aftermath. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the factories were small trading settlements, surrounded by Indian territory, often stockaded and guarded at night. The settlers were rather an isolated community, spending their working hours in acquiring the maximum of wealth in the minimum of time, and their leisure in gambling, drinking, hunting and feasting. With growing wealth and the expansion of the territory, the social structure altered. Trade was of primary importance, but soldiers, lawyers and officials as well as their wives arrived in India. There was greater ostentation, an increase in the number of servants, fan-wavers and palanquin-bearers, 'Nabobs' smoked hookahs and entertained their guests with nautch-dancing. It was probably in this middle period that the relations between the British and the Indians were at their friendliest, despite the corrupt nature of the East India Company's rule. After 1784, the expansion of British India and the growing sense of responsibility again brought a change, a widening of the gap between the two peoples. Apart from the influence of the Evangelical missionaries who tended to regard the native Indian as an unenlightened pagan dead to grace, two other factors—an increase in the number of British wives who kept aloof from Indian society and a feeling of superiority—helped to create a less friendly atmosphere. It was Cornwallis who excluded Indians from the higher posts in the government service and said, 'I verily believe

### *The American Colonies*

every native of Hindustan is corrupt' It was symptomatic that the Vice-Principal of the College of Fort William chose for the subject of a university essay prize: 'The probable design of the Divine Providence in subjecting so large a portion of Asia to the British Dominion' Government was indeed far better than it had been earlier; 'There was a time,' wrote Bishop Watson, 'when we showed ourselves to the inhabitants of India in the character of tyrants and robbers, that time, I trust, is gone for ever.' It had, but it was unfortunate that there was still comparatively little real understanding The British remained the dominant race, kindly, moved by humanitarianism, a people who had replaced anarchy and oppression by order and good government, eager to spread western education and the Christian religion, and yet withal still essentially a nation of shopkeepers using the country as an investment for British wealth and talent. It is possible to foresee something of India's future history in the story of the expansion, administration and exploitation of British India between 1714 and 1815.

### 3 *The development of the American colonies*

Within the space of a century and a half, thirteen colonies had been established along the coastline of eastern America. They represented different cultures, races, religions and forms of government, but there were three regions with much in common In the north there were the four New England colonies—New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut—in character English, Puritan, industrious and enterprising. Their wealth came mainly from commerce and shipping The middle group, consisting of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland, were more varied in type They embraced people of many different races and religions; New York was a cosmopolitan city. Their economic structure differed from that of New England. Wealth still flowed from merchandise and shipping, but farming was the

### *The First British Empire*

dominant interest and the principal occupation of the majority. The southern states formed a coherent unity. Virginia, North and South Carolina and Georgia were different from the other groups. Georgia, the last colony to be established, had had a dual object, to fulfil Oglethorpe's intention of making a colony into a home for poor debtors and to protect the plantations of South Carolina against Spanish attack. The warmer climate of the south and the large plantations worked by the toil of poor whites and negroes imported from Africa, which formed the economy on which the structure of the colonies rested, provided the wealth and leisure necessary for a cultured aristocracy. Its leaders were rich, attractive but inclined to passion, reckless gamblers and speculators. The middle class was small but industrious, below them were the large exploited classes of negroes and 'poor white trash.' One other theme demands attention the establishment of the frontier to these western lands. There had been a continuous procession of adventurous pioneers who went into the interior, where they lived a hard and rigorous life—but a life threaded by a freedom and independence unknown in a big town or a rural settlement. Naturally, they distrusted all authority, especially that of governments who wished to tax them. These fundamental economic, regional and social differences played a major part in American history.

The colonies' development in the first half of the eighteenth century suggested that secession from the mother country was probable at some time in later history. If circumstances would determine the occasion, there were already many signs of important divergences in the political, economic and social relationships of the colonies with the mother country, apart from the fact that they were separated from each other by three thousand miles of sea.

Politically, the home government moved more and more towards a centralisation of authority in the face of opposition from the colonies where separatist provincial feeling was exceptionally strong. Originally, most of the colonies had possessed considerable autonomy, but the Commonwealth Parliaments,

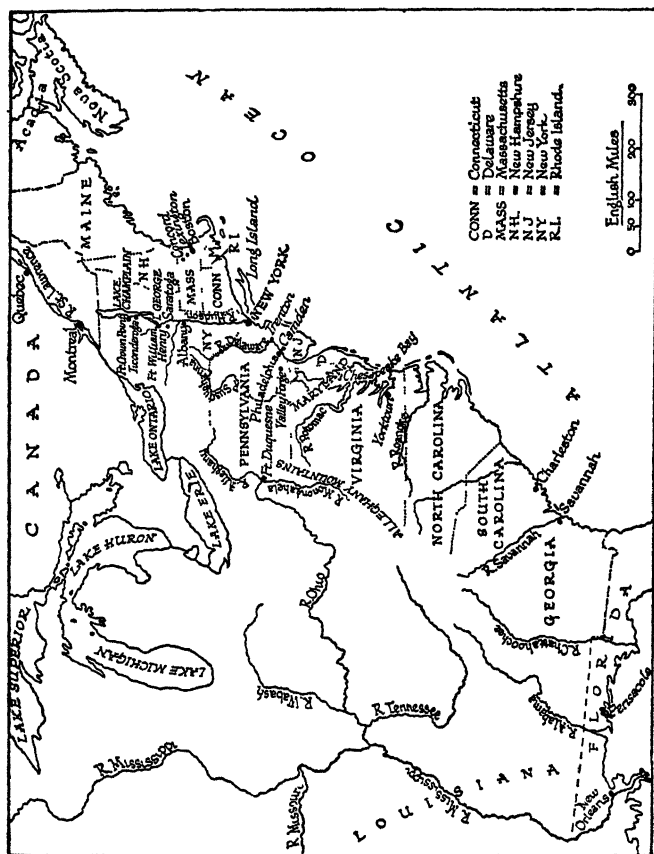


FIG. 5. North America in the Eighteenth Century.



### *The First British Empire*

proving stronger than the King, had re-exerted control. Even the Revolution of 1688 only partially modified a trend which dominated the political relationships of the colonies. More and more colonies came under the direct control of the Crown, exercising its authority through the Governor and the nominated Council. Many Governors were singularly ill-chosen; 'whenever we find ourselves encumbered with a needy Court-Dangler whom, on Account of Connections we must not kick downstairs, we kick him up into an American government' They were in constant conflict with the colonies' representative Legislative Assemblies, especially over the payment of the Governors' salaries, the right of the colonies to issue paper money and the Governor's right to veto the laws passed by the colonial Assemblies. 'I have,' said Governor Belcher of New Jersey, 'to steer between Scylla and Charybdis, to please the King's ministers at home and a touchy people here, to luff for one and bear away for another.'

Economic subordination of the colonists to the mother country paralleled the movement towards the centralisation of authority. 'The two great objects,' wrote Sir Francis Bernard, a Governor of Massachusetts, 'of Great Britain in regard to the American trade must be to oblige her American subjects to take from Great Britain only, all the manufactures and European goods which she can supply them with: 2. To regulate the foreign trade of the Americans so that the profits thereof may finally centre in Great Britain, or be applied to the improvement of her empire. Whenever these two purposes militate against each other, that which is most advantageous to Great Britain ought to be preferred.' Although British politicians did not intend to circumscribe colonial prosperity and in fact gave the colonists certain profitable monopolies, the system acted as a deterrent to economic development. The Navigation Laws of 1651 and 1660, originally designed to crush the Dutch, England's trade rivals, affected the colonies as they laid down that no goods from Asia, Africa or America could be carried to England, Ireland or the colonies except in English, Irish or colonial ships, mainly manned by Englishmen or their subjects. The law of 1660 insisted that

### *The Navigation Laws*

certain 'enumerated' articles—of which sugar, cotton, indigo and dye-wood were the most important—should only be sent to the British Isles, thus shutting out the colonists from the direct lucrative trade with Europe in these products. The Staple Act of 1663 forbade the importation of nearly all goods direct from Europe to the colonies. On paper at least, the economic subordination of the colonies to the mother country was practically complete.

This policy undoubtedly enriched Britain. 'The American,' recorded the *London Magazine* of 1766, 'is apparelled from head to foot in our manufactures . . . he scarcely drinks, sits, moves, labours or recreates himself, without contributing to the emolument of the mother country.' By 1772 the British exports to the colonies totalled the country's entire exports sixty-eight years earlier. In view of this adverse balance of trade, the American was obliged to depend on the British merchant for credit. Furthermore, the government had provoked the colonists' anger by banning the circulation of paper money as they feared that the Americans would try to pay their bills to British merchants in depreciated paper notes.

Thus, beneficial as the Navigation Laws were to the mother country, the Americans had a chain of grievances. 'The colonists in a developing country were a debtor community, faced with a persistently unfavourable balance of trade, a constant shortage of sound money, an incredible currency confusion, and an increasing multiplication of debts.' Actually, the shortness of the 'enumerated' list and the widespread system of evasion modified the unpleasant consequences of these commercial restrictions; the laws had in fact worked to the advantage of the colonists by compelling them to take up what became the very flourishing industry of ship building. Even with these qualifications, the laws proved a deterrent to colonial development, especially in the southern colonies which largely depended for income on the exchange of their products for British manufactured goods. British merchants thus exerted a powerful indirect control over the economic life of the south. The colonist

### *The First British Empire*

believed that the low price of tobacco and the high interest rates charged on the debt which he owed to the British government were engineered by the privileged classes at home, and that the British manufacturer took advantage of this to dump his unwanted goods in the colonies. At the time of the American Revolution the tobacco planters of the south owed more than £2,000,000 to British merchants. Yet, in effect, the psychological results of this subordination of the economic life of the American colonies to the needs and interests of the mother country proved more important than any distress caused by the Navigation Laws in preparing the way for the break. 'A colonist,' so reads the *Boston Gazette* of April 29th, 1765, 'cannot make a button, horse-shoe nor a hob-nail but some sooty ironmonger or respectable button-maker of Britain shall bawl and squall that his honour's worship is most egregiously maltreated, injured, cheated and robb'd by the rascally American republicans.'

This growing distrust was assisted by the Englishmen's assumed social superiority, as the treatment given to Benjamin Franklin shows. Franklin, the leading American scientist, philosopher and politician, had secured some letters which reflected unfavourably on royal officials in Massachusetts. His Bostonian friends printed them in spite of his request that they should not do so. He was summoned before the Privy Council and grilled by Wedderburn, the Solicitor-General. He listened to the abuse without moving a muscle, but the hour remained indelibly printed in his mind. Such an experience represented the quintessence of what many colonists felt about the British superiority-complex and did much to broaden the gulf between the two peoples.

The political, economic and social developments of the thirteen colonies contained the seeds of separation. Radical colonial politicians were already beginning to appeal to the writings of John Locke and the concept of Natural Law in support of their opposition to the absolute authority of the British Parliament. On the other hand the situation was still very confused. Provincial loyalties and class barriers, the marked difference between the

### *The American Revolution*

viewpoints of radical and conservative politicians in the colonies, all prevented a united front. Furthermore the colonist's attention had been focussed on the perpetual threat to his security from the French. Constant anxiety was engendered by Imperial strategy and frontier skirmishes. The issues which formed the main theme of American history could then only come to a climax after the threat from the French had disappeared. Even so, many colonists concluded that British control was one-sided and unfair. General development converged with particular circumstances to bring matters to a head in the first decade of George III's reign.

#### *4 The American Revolution*

The revolt of the thirteen colonies, possibly the most momentous event in the history of the eighteenth century, was the result of a development which had been occurring over long years. The process was hastened by the change of circumstances wrought by the Treaty of Paris (1763). But the American Revolution was the climax to the historical evolution of the colonies. It is only within the context of their past history that the origins of the Revolution can be satisfactorily understood.

Was there any chance of halting a movement so deeply rooted in the past? In 1770 the elder Pitt seems to have envisaged an Imperial federation which might have saved the situation if it had been accepted immediately. This would have meant the creation of an Imperial Parliament containing representatives from America, the West Indies and Ireland in addition to the British peers and M P s. But neither this nor any other plan was favoured by the British public. As against this and every other measure of reconciliation King George III stood adamant. 'I shall only add,' he wrote to Lord North in January, 1782, 'that on one material point, I shall ever coincide with Lord G. Germain, this is against a separation from America, and that I shall never lose an opportunity of declaring that no consideration

### *The First British Empire*

shall ever make me in the smallest degree an instrument in a measure that I am confident would annihilate the rank in which the British Empire stands among European states, and would render my situation in this country below continuing an object to me. . . .’ Such rigidity without compromise was bound to lead to trouble, trouble which the end of the Seven Years’ War precipitated

The war had revealed the imperfections of colonial administration and had shown that the system needed to be reconstructed if British control was to be effective. There was then ample room for a readjustment of policy and a further move in the direction of centralised authority both in political and economic matters. Two other factors had emerged as a result of the war. The disappearance of the French threat opened up an endless vista of expansion over the passes of the Appalachian mountains beyond to the Western lands. The British government, perturbed by probable conflict with the Red Indian tribes inhabiting these regions and alarmed by Pontiac’s rising in 1763, declared that no British subject should buy land or settle west of a line corresponding roughly with the Alleghany mountains. The American backwoodsman, the eastern speculator and the southern planter regarded this law of 1764 as a cowardly surrender to the cruel and primitive Redskin and a defiance of their own natural rights. It was disregarded from the very start. The other issue was financial, the vast increase in the national debt caused by the war, and the consequent intention of the British government to try to make the colonist pay for the garrison which it decided to keep in the colonies.

These were the three problems—the reconstruction of colonial government, the ban on expansion to the west and the need for a colonial revenue—which became interlocked with the political and economic developments already in existence. On the one side the home government, inheriting the traditional conception of empire, tried to reconstruct the old system by eliminating its present inadequacies. On the other side, the colonists opposed a reorganisation of government which implied

### *Stamps and Molasses*

a threat to their autonomy, their purses and their liberty. And in either case the superficial aspect was primarily financial

The first step in the implementation of British policy was the Sugar Act of 1764. The prosperity of the northern colonies partly rested on rum, of which molasses forms the essential ingredient. Molasses was obtained from the West Indian islands. In 1733 Robert Walpole had imposed a duty of sixpence a gallon on foreign molasses imported into the American colonies, as a sop to the West Indian planters who had resented the important but illicit trading connections of the colonies with the French and Spanish West Indian Islands. Walpole had recognised that it was difficult in existing conditions to enforce it, and in practice it had become a dead letter. Grenville had now decided to introduce a new act reducing the duty to threepence; the duty was lower but would be more effectively enforced. The northern merchants were horrified, for they had only accepted the duty of sixpence for the last thirty years because it had been so irregularly enforced. The blow fell and momentarily crippled the profitable rum industry of the north. Debarred from the valuable exchange trade, the merchants were obliged to sell their provisions at a low rate to the British West Indian planters, 'the Creolians,' or to let them rot on their wharves. The economic depression which resulted formed a fertile soil for misunderstanding and so 'helped materially to produce the conditions out of which opposition to the Stamp Act sprang.'

The Stamp Act, which required all legal documents, pamphlets and newspapers to bear a stamp, had been imposed in England without opposition. Grenville anticipated that if it were imposed in the colonies, it would produce £60,000 which would be used to pay for the garrison. No member of Parliament believed that the prosperous colonists could object to so mild a fiscal measure. 'They must be the veriest beggars in the world,' wrote the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (Nov. 13th, 1765), 'if such inconsiderable duties appear to be intolerable burthens in their eyes.' But this was not the point of the opposition.

### *The First British Empire*

The Stamp Act threatened the political liberties rather than the economic well-being of the colonists. In its very essence it struck at the purses and privileges of some of the most influential members of the colonial community, at the lawyers, journalists and tavern-keepers. And behind the threat to the existence of such vested interests there was the growing distrust of any form of parliamentary taxation imposed on the colonies.

Thus the Stamp Act united the colonists in a way that war against a foreign foe had been powerless to do. Provincial and social divisions, ordinarily so strong, were momentarily placed on one side. 'Sons of Liberty' were being organised in every American city to seize and burn the stamps, to vent their rage on the unfortunate stamp masters (Grenville had hoped to conciliate the colonists by selecting members of their own community for this job), and to stimulate mob action against those who favoured the British government. The climax came in New York where a small British garrison was surrounded by a mob of angry men and women. On the day that the Stamp Act should have taken effect (Nov. 1st, 1765), the Americans wore black crêpe in their hats, tolled muffled bells in the churches and beat at the gates of the fort, screaming defiance. The mob burned the library, wrecked the house and drank the wine of Colonel James, the British commander and, final ignominy, placed a 'drunken Indian' in the Lieutenant-Governor's coach. But mob rule was only one aspect of a fast developing situation. What was more important was the lead given to the opposition by members of the colonial and mercantile aristocracy. At the instance of James Otis of Massachusetts, delegates from seven out of the thirteen colonies had attended a Congress—the Stamp Act Congress—at New York in October, 1765. It drew up a petition to Parliament, stating that taxation was inseparable from representation, and gave its implicit approval to a complete boycott of British goods. 'Patriotic women flocked to associations, pledged themselves not to drink tea, and, besides refusing to purchase British goods, set to work spinning and weaving with greater energy than ever. . . . "The maidens" of Providence

### *The Repeal of the Stamp Act*

bound themselves to favour no suitors who approved of the Stamp Act.'

The British were surprised and aggrieved at the outburst of indignation, for, except in St Kitts (where the trouble was attributed to American sailors), no other British colony had registered such marked disapproval. The sudden cancellation of a vast and flourishing export trade had a most injurious effect on British merchants. Although logically they would have preferred to have used force to compel the colonists to accept the Stamp Act, the interests of the commercial community led to a series of petitions demanding the repeal of the Stamp Act. Pitt added the weight of his influence to this demand. He recognised that Parliament had an absolute right to impose regulations on trade; 'they must obey and we prescribe.' But he also held that there was a clear distinction between indirect and direct taxation. 'On a question that may mortally wound the freedom of three millions of virtuous and brave subjects . . . I cannot be silent . . . It is my opinion that this kingdom has no right to lay a tax upon the colonies . . . They are the subjects of this kingdom, equally entitled with yourselves to all the natural rights of mankind, and the peculiar privileges of Englishmen. equally bound by its laws and equally participating of the constitution of this free country. . . . As subjects they are entitled to the common right of representation and cannot be bound to pay taxes without their consent.'

But all the oratory of Pitt, who in actual fact represented a mere minority of intelligent men, would have been unavailing if the merchants' pockets had not been touched. The Rockingham ministry decided to repeal the Act, safeguarding parliamentary omniscience by a Declaratory Act affirming Parliament's right to tax the colonies. This saving clause enabled the government to make a retreat without surrendering the principle on which the Stamp Act had rested. In effect the repeal of the Stamp Act really settled nothing. 'The throwing of Squibs, Crackers, firing of muskets and pistols, breaking some windows and forcing off the Knockers off the Doors,' with which the



### *The First British Empire*

brighter spirits celebrated the repeal, afforded a purely temporary relief. The sole effect of the Stamp Act on the British Exchequer had been to leave a deficit of £631 9s, it was further off from a colonial revenue than ever. British opinion was exacerbated by the rebellious insubordination of the Americans with its defiance of law and order. The colonists, their initial rejoicings over, recommenced their old struggles with the colonial Governors.

What hopes of reconciliation there were, were doomed to failure, especially as the control of American affairs had passed virtually into the hands of the scintillating but unsympathetic Townshend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. 'If we once lose the superintendency of the colonies,' he had said, 'this nation is undone.' He believed that he could avail himself of his rights under the Declaratory Act (of 1766) to diminish the strength of the Parliamentary opposition and to reduce the colonists to submission. The cost of colonial defence, of keeping the insubordinate Americans in order, had mounted at an increasing rate, defence and administration cost the government upwards of £400,000 to which the colonists did not contribute a penny. This necessitated the continuance of the land tax which the country gentry disliked. Any ministry which could reduce it would go some way towards gaining their support. Townshend practically promised the House of Commons in January, 1767, that he knew a way to raise an American revenue without offending the colonists. No action followed this gesture but the fractious House voted a reduction of the land tax from four shillings to three shillings in defiance of the ministry. This left a deficit in the budget which forced the Chancellor to take action, he introduced a series of duties on glass, lead, paint, paper and tea imported to the colonies, to defray the cost of colonial defence and administration. Burke pointed out the flaws in this scheme. He argued that the distinction between the Stamp Act and the new duties was too subtle to convince the Americans who would oppose the duties with the same determination as they had shown on the earlier occasion. The complacent Commons voted the

### *The Massachusetts Circular Letter, 1768*

duties by 180 to 98 votes, and, his work done, Townshend died, passing to reap his reward in the other world whilst his successor reaped the harvest, of thistles, he had sown.

Once again events were only prevented from coming to the climax of war by disunity in the provinces. The merchants disliked the way in which the 'radicals' tended to control the situation. Nevertheless Sam Adam's important Massachusetts Circular Letter of 1768 represented much colonial feeling, the right of taxation, he argued, was unalterably confined to the colonial assemblies and Parliament had no justification in Natural Law to impose any tax without proper representation. The Townshend duties led, despite the slightness of the economic burden which they imposed, to a renewal of the blockade. In practice this proved less effective in 1768 than it had done in 1765, as some of the more conservative colonists were unwilling to sacrifice their tastes or business or luxuries to what they regarded as the whims of embittered idealists or fervent speechmakers. The situation was saved, temporarily, by another partial retreat at home and by discord between the conservative and radical elements in the colonies. The English could not understand what appeared to them to be the ludicrous fuss that the colonists were making. The ministry concluded that as the revenues from the duties were so small and as they might interfere with the prosperity of British traders and manufacturers, 'so uncommercial' as Hillsborough put it, they should be repealed. One duty remained, that on tea, at the urgent request of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord North, to remind the colonists that the retreat was not intended to be a surrender.

Relieved of some grievances, others yet remained and resentment continued to smoulder and at last burst into flame when the British government imposed the Tea Act of 1773. North wished to save the Directors of the East India Company from the insolvency which threatened them by arranging for the Company to export its tea direct to the colonies. The import of tea would bring additional revenue to the government. The export of tea would benefit the East India Company by doing away with the

### *The First British Empire*

services of the middle-man and at the same time enable tea to be sold to the colonists at a cheaper rate even than that sold by the Dutch smugglers. It was incredible that the Americans should prefer non-British tea that was more expensive to the British tea upon which the detested duty had been paid. But they did, partly because the Tea Act threatened the economic interests of those who had occupied themselves in the smuggling trade, partly because it struck at the root of American liberty by reviving once more the never-dormant issue of taxation. In other words, tea temporarily reconciled the conflicting interests and married Boston with the North and South. It was Hancock's Boston Whigs, thinly disguised as Redskins, who began the series of tea-dumpings by throwing the East India Company's produce into the waters of the harbour on the night of December 16th, 1773. Similar action took place at Greenwich, New Jersey, at Charleston, South Carolina, at Annapolis, Maryland, and at New York itself.

The ensuing crisis helped to bring on the war, as it made the colonists more fully aware than ever before of the issues at stake. And, as if to assist in this process, the British House of Commons passed the 'intolerable' and coercive acts. The home country's reaction to the course of events at Boston had been one of intense, spontaneous indignation. Even Chatham condemned the 'tea-party' as criminal and spoke of restitution. 'I would rather,' was the later comment of a writer in the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 'all the Hamulcars, and all the Hannibals that Boston ever bred; all the Hancocks, and all the Sad Cocks, and Sad Dogs of Massachusetts Bay; all the heroes of tar and feathers, and the champions, maimers of unpatriotic horses, mules and mares, were led up to the Altar, or to Liberty Tree, there to be exalted and rewarded according to their merit or demerit, than that Britam should disgrace herself by receding from her just authority'

North's ministry had no intention of doing this. The Boston Port Bill, introduced in March, 1774, closed the port to all shipping until the Bostonians compensated the East India

### *Increasing Tension*

Company for the tea they had destroyed. The bill spelt economic ruin for the prosperous port and was one of the factors which drew together the propertied classes and the agrarian and more democratic elements in the colonies. The Commons then passed to the second act; the Massachusetts Government Act of May, 1774, deliberately reformed the constitution of that colony in the interests of centralised control by the home government. In effect it abrogated the liberties and rights which Massachusetts had enjoyed under royal charter since its foundation, and more particularly since the revised charter of 1691. The third of these so-called Coercion Acts was mainly concerned with the administration of the newly acquired province of Canada, but it touched the colonists at two important points. By extending the southern boundary of Quebec to the Ohio river and westward towards the Mississippi, the act practically reaffirmed the declaration of 1764 and was a blow to land speculators and frontiersmen. 'The finger of God,' said the *New York Journal* (July 20th, 1775), 'points out a mighty Empire to your sons: the Savages of the wilderness were never expelled to make room in this, the best part of the Continent, for idolators and slaves.' The 'idolators' referred to the Canadian Roman Catholics who had been given permission to worship as they liked by the provisions of the Act. This clause revived the ancient fear of papistry; 'The Inquisition,' dutifully wrote the *Pennsylvania Packet* (Oct. 31st, 1774), 'may erect her standard in Pennsylvania and the city of Philadelphia may yet experience the carnage of a St. Bartholomew's Day.' Such dynamic emotion formed an extraordinarily good background to the rising tide of revolt.

The Coercion Acts aroused all the latent forces of opposition. British intervention, or the fear of it, encouraged colonial unity, as soon as the news of the Port Act arrived the Bostonians arranged for Paul Revere to go to New York and Philadelphia. There were, of course, many conservatives who would have much rather paid for the tea than have aided a turmoil in which the radicals had an increasing voice. But they could do little to still the storm. George Washington apostrophised everyone's feelings

### *The First British Empire*

when he asked whether they should 'supinely sit and see one province after another fall a prey to despotism.' In desperation the New York conservatives suggested the summoning of a Continental Congress to avert too precipitate action. Although the Boston radicals were not eager for this, as it would delay the imposition of an effective economic blockade, the Philadelphia moderates brought their weight to bear in favour of the New Yorkers. There was much about the first Continental Congress which assembled at Philadelphia in September, 1774, to give it a conservative, even an aristocratic appearance, but there was nevertheless a strong and vigorous radical element. Despite their divisions the delegates agreed to petition the King, reciting their grievances and declaring their rights. While they reaffirmed their loyalty to the Crown, they criticised the actions which the ministry had taken in firm but measured language. They declared their sympathy with Massachusetts, approved her resistance and agreed to impose a further blockade of British exports and imports. The session ended on the ominous note that if force was used to put down the colonists 'all America ought to support them.'

The clash was now practically inevitable. It was only a question of time and occasion. In their denial of parliamentary authority and decision to resist force which had the sanction of Parliament, the colonists had presented an ultimatum to the mother country. On April 19th General Gage despatched a small force to take possession of a store of ammunition collected by the colonial militia at Concord. The Americans fired—and at Lexington a virtual state of conflict became an actual state of war. It is difficult, even impossible, to assess the responsibility for the war. In a sense, it was inevitable that the political and economic development of the colonies would sooner or later bring about a conflict, or at least separation. The events of the period following the Treaty of Paris intensified the friction and temporarily united the colonists without leading to any real understanding of the situation in Britain itself. Perhaps Dr. D. L. Keir's comment is most just: 'Responsibility for the

## *The War of American Independence*

failure of the eighteenth-century constitution to find any means of harmonising imperial unity and colonial self-government may be not unequally divided between British and American politicians, the former for their lack of realism in dealing with the problems involved, and the latter for their irresponsible repudiation of imperial obligation.' In fine, the war may only be explained within the history of the evolution of the colonies and of the mother country itself.

### *5. The War of American Independence*

It would have been difficult to have foreseen the outcome of the war in 1775. The colonial forces were small, poorly equipped and untrained. Although they outnumbered the British regulars, it was only Washington's skill and the courage of an ardent nucleus of officers who surrounded him that prevented disaster time and time again. It must not be imagined that the skirmish at Lexington miraculously united a people who had hitherto found it difficult to reach any agreement on the most critical of occasions. The ranks of the colonists were sundered repeatedly by social and political divisions, to every idealist there were at least two self-seekers, and to every enthusiast three or more who were indifferent. Military service was so unpopular in America that generous grants of land had to be made to entice men to enter the army. The deplorable finances of the thirteen colonies became steadily worse as the war continued. Congress, which represented the colonies, was not empowered to levy taxes so that the conduct of a federal army and administration depended on contributions from the individual states. In an effort to support its credit, it printed paper bills which soon became valueless and landed the new country with an incredible financial muddle from which it did not readily free itself. The war was fought and won by a minority who possessed an incomparable general in George Washington.

But if the enthusiasm of a minority was Washington's

### *The First British Empire*

greatest asset, British incompetence was undoubtedly another. If General Howe had been a little less fond of comfort and more prone to vigorous action, the history of the campaigns in America might have been different. Howe failed to make good use of his initial successes in 1776 and so enabled Washington to push the English back at Trenton and Princeton. Again if Howe had crept outside the security of Philadelphia in an effort to crush Washington at Valley Forge, he might yet have won the war for Britain. But this is not to say that Britain had not grave disadvantages. Separated by three thousand miles of water from the mother country, strategy was naturally left in the hands of the British commanders on the spot, while policy remained in the heads of British ministers whose knowledge of the colonial situation was ill-informed. All these disadvantages, to which must be added the difficulty of fighting in the midst of a semi-hostile population, do not entirely account for the British disasters. They had indeed many assets—plentiful money, a trained army, a systematic unitary state—all of which the Americans lacked.

It might be said that there were divided counsels at home. Chatham certainly spent his remaining days defending the colonists, even if he would never have agreed to their independence. 'I love the Americans because they love liberty' 'The gentleman,' he told the Upper House, 'tells us that America is obstinate, America is almost in open rebellion. I rejoice that America has resisted.' He urged conciliation but in vain. Again the Dean of Gloucester, Dr. Tucker, supported the colonists' demand for independence on the ground that a political and military alliance between two independent countries would be far more productive of good than an attempt to suppress the 'smothered rebellion.' The economist Adam Smith came to a similar conclusion: 'by their parting good friends the natural affection of the mother country would quickly revive.' Burke and Chatham both denounced the theory of absolute and irresponsible sovereignty, with its corollary, Parliament's right to impose taxes without representation. But these views were not held by the vast majority of the English people. They would have re-echoed

### *The Course of the War*

the words George III used to North: 'we must either master them or totally leave them to themselves and treat them as aliens'

But mastery was less simple than it sounded. Nothing decisive occurred in the first two years of war. While the Navy remained in unchallenged control of American waters, the Army was free to operate against whichever centre of rebellion it chose or to transfer or reinforce its men at selected points. As the more important colonies formed a compact whole bounded by the rivers Hudson and St. Lawrence and the sea, much depended on the control of the first-named river, for Canada on the other side of the St. Lawrence was loyal and the Navy held the sea. That was why Howe occupied New York and pressed Washington back into New Jersey. The British plan for 1777 was designed to achieve the occupation of the Hudson river area by a converging movement. While General Burgoyne marched downstream from Canada, Clinton marched from the sea end of the river to meet him. If this had happened the line of the Hudson would have been sealed. In fact, Clinton was obliged to fall back on New York and Burgoyne was compelled to surrender at Saratoga.

Although the war still had many years to run and Washington had yet to suffer defeat at Brandywine, see Howe settle in Philadelphia and endure the frightful winter at Valley Forge, the surrender at Saratoga was of decisive importance. Militarily Burgoyne's surrender was a great blow to British prestige and a tremendous encouragement to the colonists, but its political significance was even greater. It persuaded the French to enter the war against Britain in an effort to wipe out the humiliation of the Treaty of Paris. A great deal of political idealism and humanist enthusiasm flourished beneath the setting sun of the Bourbon monarchy; the ideals for which the Americans, ably represented in Paris by Benjamin Franklin, fought, appealed to all those who believed that political oppression was crumbling before the rights of man. They went as volunteers before Saratoga. After the surrender the two countries signed an alliance and six thousand Frenchmen under Rochambeau were



### *The First British Empire*

despatched to help Washington. Ironically the most youthful of nations was saved by the *ancien régime*. For the first time since the war began British communications and command of the seas were seriously challenged. American and French privateers did much damage to British merchant shipping, while the French fleet cut the communications which made British strategy practicable.

Although nearly four years separate Saratoga from Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown, all the main links in the chain of events were now forged. Spain's entry into the war, which had been delayed by her fear of what repercussions the American rebellion might have on her colonies, meant that the French fleet was still further reinforced. If bad weather had not intervened and the Spaniards had not made the strategic error of attacking Gibraltar, gallantly defended by Lord Heathfield, the British might have lost the command of the Channel and so have laid themselves open to invasion. There was a slight turning of the wheel of fortune in Britain's favour in the colonies, that 'Indian' summer of 1780 which witnessed the siege and capture of Charleston, and the timely arrival of Rodney in the West Indies, but it was only an interval. Britain declared war on Holland which had been smuggling supplies to the rebels from her island of St. Eustatius. The French fleet under De Grasse gained control of American waters and so co-operated with Washington and Rochambeau to shut up Cornwallis in Yorktown (whither he had marched in order to keep in touch with the navy). On October 19th, 1781, Cornwallis surrendered as the British band played appropriately enough 'The World Turned Upside Down'. Hostilities continued in other theatres of war, but the War of American Independence had ended.

### *6. The Treaty of Versailles*

America rose slowly like a phoenix from the ashes of war, basing her recovery on a century and a half's achievements in

*July 4th, 1776*

political and economic activity Modern Americans accept July 4th, 1776, as Independence Day, for it was then that the Congress of Philadelphia affirmed, with four abstentions, that 'When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal stations to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinion of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation . . . We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. . . That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organising its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. . . Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former system of government' The 'Declaration of Independence' was the most important result of the war, for it brought the United States of America into being It showed that the divided states had reached some form of unity and that reconciliation with Britain was now virtually impossible. In 1777 the Articles of Confederation for the first time made official use of the phrase 'United States of America.' There can surely be no question that the recognition of the independence of the United States was the most significant of all the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles For this Treaty, negotiated by Shelburne and concluded by the Fox-North coalition, admitted what the concluding phases of the war had shown to be practically inevitable, the independence of the thirteen colonies The United States received all the territory between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi without any constricting western boundary. This enabled the Americans to push forward in the course of time across the prairie provinces and the

### *The First British Empire*

middle west towards the Pacific. It removed a possible source of friction; the question of the loyalists and the settlement of debts were also included in the Treaty.

France and Spain were less generously treated, even though they were the victors <sup>1</sup> France received the West Indian island of Tobago, St. Pierre and Miquelon and the fishing rights off the Newfoundland coast. She recovered St. Lucia, her Indian settlements, as well as Goree and Senegal in West Africa, and was given the right to fortify Dunkirk. More important, the American Revolution had injected France with a virus that was to help lay low the monarchy less than a decade later. The vitality of the colonists, their impressive declaration of human rights, gripped the minds and emotions of those Frenchmen who were more and more dissatisfied with the incompetence of the *ancien régime*. The war had also still further impoverished France's treasury and left the country facing the abyss of bankruptcy, which compelled the calling of the States-General six years later. Spain had entered the war strengthened by the reforms initiated by her enlightened ruler, Charles III. She acquired Minorca and Florida, restored the Bahamas to Britain and limited the dyewood privileges enjoyed by British settlers in Honduras. But Spain's recovery had been largely illusory; for she had been long touched by political and economic decay. The concessions made to her were really concessions to her weakness. Minorca strengthened her position in the Mediterranean. Florida added to her colonial possessions in America. But neither territory did really more than add to the burden of a vast empire, great portions of which, impregnated with the very ideas for which her soldiers had been fighting, were soon to renounce her rule and demand their independence. The third of the European powers, Holland, gained little and lost much, for the war brought to a close the intimate financial relationship between Britain and Holland which had been so beneficial to

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's great naval victory over De Grasse (the battle of the Saints) in April, 1782, induced the French to concede more generous terms than they had intended and fully re-established British command of the seas.

### *The Treaty of Versailles*

both countries. Instead, the Dutch took to investing in France and so loaned money to a practically bankrupt state, as well as to an impoverished new republic. Either way, Dutch credit suffered.

The long-term effects of the Treaty of Versailles were more important, for they reflected an epochal development in world history. Against a background in which exhaustion was still joined with splendour to create pride, whether within the austerity of the Escorial or the glittering Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, the observer watches the victorious imperial power of 1763 suddenly split into an old Britain and a new America. Both states sprang from the same background, in language, race, religion and ideas, and evolved out of the same civilising process. Both were governed by the same forms of government, moving slowly towards democracy, if still dominated by their relative ruling classes. Both had been nurtured in the same culture, appreciation of reason, tolerance and humanity. Both fostered private enterprise and *laissez-faire*. This is not, of course, to say that each country did not have features which distinguished it from the other; the expansion of the frontiers and the great immigration of the nineteenth century certainly tended to change the American character. Furthermore there was only a momentary interruption in the commercial contacts of the two nations. Within a decade, Anglo-American trade was one of the foundation-stones of British prosperity and, despite the war of 1812-1814, one of the bases of British credit in the Napoleonic Wars. In a phrase, America's civilisation was British rather than European and the Treaty of Versailles marked a stage in a process of evolution rather than a break in personal relationship.

There were indeed vast changes inlaid in the Treaty of Versailles. Three European powers ceased to compete in the race for domination, even if the France of Napoleon made one last, supreme, vain effort. In the coming century the defeated nation, Britain, dominated the world, to watch with a satisfaction not devoid of sorrow the United States rise to world power in the twentieth. The whole course of the American Revolution showed

### *The First British Empire*

that it was the climax to a natural process of historical development, if accidental in its occasion, and, for this reason, the final result of the Treaty may be welcomed rather than, as it was with so many contemporaries in 1783, condemned

#### *7. The Colonial aftermath, 1783-1815*

A new empire in shape and system began to grow up in the next half-century, it formed, broadly speaking, the basis upon which the modern British Commonwealth is founded. It is impossible to detect any definite design in its gradual growth. There remained of the old empire in 1783, Canada, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, some West Indian islands, a few trading posts on the African coast and the steadily-expanding domains of the East India Company. Australia, which had impressed Captain James Cook as a suitable field for colonisation as early as 1770,<sup>1</sup> began its existence when the first expedition of 1,100 people, two-thirds of whom were convicts, sailed under Captain Phillip for Sydney in 1787. Its early history was tempestuous. Writing in 1788, Surgeon Bowes said 'the anarchy and confusion which prevails throughout the Camp is arrived to such a pitch as is not to be equalled.' And it is quite possible that the government would have abandoned the settlement had it not been for the earnest remonstrances of Cook's friend, the geographer and botanist, Sir Joseph Banks. As late as 1833 the Chief Justice commented that 'it would appear as if the main business were the commission of crime and the punishment of it; as if the whole colony were continually in motion towards the several courts of justice.' But, with some exceptions, the early Governors, Phillip, King and Macquarie, were able and farsighted men whose skilful rule laid firm foundations for later developments. The discovery of coal north of Sydney solved the fuel shortage.

<sup>1</sup> Cook wrote 'In this extensive country, it can never be doubted but what most sorts of grain, fruits, roots, etc., of every kind, would flourish were they once brought hither . . . and here is provender for more cattle, at all seasons of the year, than ever can be brought into the country.'

### *Early Australia*

The importation of Spanish merino sheep from South Africa by Captain John MacArthur opened up a new phase which led later to a far-reaching commercial and industrial revolution. Explorers gradually revealed the geographical details of a vast continent. Little of the future of the colony could, however, be perceived by 1815. Strategic and commercial considerations account for most of the other additions to British territory. Of the conquests made since 1793 Britain retained control of Heligoland, Malta, the Ionian Islands, Cape Colony, Mauritius, Seychelles, Ceylon, Guiana, St. Lucia, Tobago and Trinidad.

The relatively slight expansion of territory between 1783 and 1815 shows that statesmen as well as the general public were uninterested in acquiring new colonies. They held that colonial possessions were of doubtful political and economic advantage to a modern state. Many people considered that the country was well-rid of the thirteen colonies and should not repeat the experiment. Merchants and industrialists were more and more interested in the extremely profitable trade with the United States and were therefore indifferent to colonial schemes whose future value could not be foreseen. The weakness of Bourbon France after 1815 removed the only possible rival to Britain's colonial supremacy and so made the acquisition of new bases for strategic reasons unnecessary.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the influence of the Evangelical movement was opposed to colonial schemes which might lead to the enslavement of native peoples. All these causes contributed to the absence of any major colonial enterprise either before or after 1815.

The British government had learned that such territory as they possessed must be ruled firmly to prevent any repetition of what had happened in America. Whatever possibility there had been of the new empire developing along semi-democratic lines towards responsible self-government was shattered by the failure of the government to apply this to the oldest of colonies, Ireland, between 1782 and 1785. Thus the principle of centralised authority, overriding local liberties, if not oblivious of the

<sup>1</sup> Fear of what Napoleon, isolated at St Helena, might do, led after 1815 to the annexation of Asuncion and Tristan da Cunha

### *The First British Empire*

colonists' interests, threaded the India Act of 1784, the Canada Constitutional Act of 1791 and the administrations imposed on the colonies—Cape Colony, Ceylon, Mauritius, Malta and the Ionian Islands—which had been acquired through the war. The Canada Constitutional Act provides the best illustration of a re-adjustment of the old system. The colony of 70,000 Frenchmen, added to by the big influx of United Empire Loyalists after 1783, had received sympathetic, paternal rule from its two soldier Governors, General Murray and Sir Guy Carleton (who was Governor from 1767–1770, 1775–1778 and 1786–1796). But the influx of the British settlers from the United States and the home country, so different in race, religion and temperament from the French, necessitated a change in the form of government. The Act of 1791, under which Canada was governed until the time of the Durham Report, placed all the responsibility for government on the politicians in London, but also established assemblies elected by a restricted franchise in the two parts, Upper and Lower, into which Canada was now divided. The constitution's chief merit was that in each case to some extent it preserved the living stream of tradition, but it gave rise to growing difficulties which formed the chief theme of Canadian history from 1791 to 1837. In other words, the new Imperial system could not long outlast the growth of democratic sentiment in a colony.

And there were important developments visible in the period before the war ended which affected colonial policy at a later date. Even if the trade with the West Indies was steadily diminishing as that with the United States grew,<sup>1</sup> the steady commercial contacts between the colonies and the mother country, which are well revealed in the growth of the timber trade with Canada,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The figures are most astonishing. Imports of cotton from the West Indies and United States were as follows 1786–90 W. Indies 71 per cent.; 1796–1800 (i.e. after Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin in U.S.) W. Indies 35½ per cent. U.S.A 24 per cent, 1826–30. W. Indies 2½ per cent. U.S.A 74½ per cent.

<sup>2</sup> In 1802 Britain imported 7,500 loads of timber from British America and 247,000 from Europe. In 1821, 318,000 loads were imported from British America and 99,000 from Europe.

### *Colonial Expansion and Commerce*

laid the foundation of what was later to form a strong binding link between Britain and her colonies 'The object of this expansion of empire,' says a colonial expert on the later period of history, 'was not, as Adam Smith had said of the First Empire, to raise up a people of customers but to secure to Great Britain the freedom to sell all over the world the products of her growing industries. The stimulus of industrial revolution created the motive of imperial policy.' A growing interest in exploration, suggested by Alexander Mackenzie's journey up the Canadian river which bears his name and Mungo Park's voyages up the Niger in 1795 and 1805, formed a factor of a different sort, a love of adventure which drew men to virgin territory which was in course of time brought under the control of the mother country. At home the formation of a civil service—the third Secretaryship of War and Colonies (1801) and the Colonial Office (1812) were established in the period—solely concerned with colonial administration naturally led to a growth of responsibility.

And the development of this new attitude, of a sense of greater responsibility towards subject peoples, probably formed the best bequest of the age to the colonial future. Burke's indictment against Warren Hastings had disclosed its presence. The movement against the slave trade was closely associated with its development. The interesting if rather dismal experiment at Sierra Leone revealed it at work. The slave trade had long formed an integral part of colonial history as well as an extremely profitable source of wealth to the great merchants and shippers of Liverpool and other ports. Between 1783 and 1793, Liverpool slavers despatched over 300,000 slaves to the West Indies, selling them for £15,000,000 and making a net profit of thirty per cent. The slaves were bought from a native chief, or simply seized by a landing party sent ashore from the slave-trader for that purpose. The suffering which they endured on ship sears the imagination, so closely packed and chained in their ill-ventilated quarters that they could not even lie flat on their backs. On their arrival, they were then sold, possibly to a good owner, more probably to an overseer whose human sympathies hardly extended to



### *The First British Empire*

native Africans. There had always been men who had questioned the morality of the slave trade, but it was not until the number of negro slaves at work in England increased that the problem was really brought home to the ordinary Englishman. The issue was raised in a practical form by Granville Sharp, who argued that a slave became free as soon as his foot touched English soil, and in 1772 actually applied his argument by prosecuting the owner of a fugitive slave called James Somerset for keeping him against his wishes on board ship. In his judgment, L. C. J. Mansfield concluded: 'whatever inconveniences therefore may follow from this decision I cannot say this case is allowed or approved by the law of England, and therefore the black must be discharged'

The Somerset Case aroused great interest and was the first in a series of steps that led to the formation of the Anti-Slavery Society, in which Sharp, a former missionary from the West Indies called Ramsay, Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce soon took the lead. The Abolitionist campaign opened in 1788 in favourable circumstances but, despite a series of bills presented to the House, it was not until 1806 that the slave trade was eventually abolished. The long delay can be attributed to three factors, the vested interests of the West Indian planters and British merchants who were unwilling to lose over £20,000,000 worth of property in human flesh without a struggle, the outbreak of the French Revolution which made so many Englishmen fearful of all change, and the existence of a large centre block in the House led by Dundas who disliked the slave trade but did not believe it was politically or economically expedient to abolish it immediately. Thus it was not until 1806 that Charles James Fox's ministry approved the actual measure 'prohibiting all means of dealing and trading in slaves in Africa or elsewhere' on pain of penalty; it was passed by 283 votes to 16.

The Sierra Leone experiment, like the Abolitionist agitation, was mainly an outcome of the Evangelical movement. Granville Sharp and others of the 'Clapham Sect' planned to form a colony of repatriated negroes, chiefly freed slaves, on the West

### *The Sierra Leone Experiment*

African coast. The first expedition failed and the 'saints' had to begin again, forming the Sierra Leone Company in 1791. Zachary Macaulay arrived in the colony in 1794 to avert a second disaster. Despite the firing of the settlement by a French squadron in 1794, he made good headway, building up a profitable and legitimate trade before he returned home in 1799. As soon as he had gone, troubles recommenced, and in 1807 the Company surrendered the colony to the government. But the Company had an importance beyond its apparent insignificance, for none of the subscribers of the original capital of £240,000 ever received interest on their investments or a return on their capital. Moreover, for this was not strange in itself, they were willing to make this sacrifice so that a new idea, the principle of treating negroes as equal human beings and insisting on justice and humanity rather than on trade and profit, might find expression in colonial government.

Thus while the period 1783-1815 saw little change in the actual form of government, except a tightening-up of the controls exercised by the central authority, or in economic regulation, there were yet signs of a quickening interest in contacts between the colonies and the mother country and of a real sense of responsibility towards subject peoples, which led to fruitful and important developments in the nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE YOUNGER PITT, 1784-1792

#### 1. *Inherited genius. the significance of his ministry*

The relationship between inheritance and genius has never been satisfactorily solved. No certain prediction can be made as to the qualities which a man may inherit from a great father. William Pitt's early education was dominated by the 'ethical' and 'political' standpoint of his father. At thirteen, he composed a youthful tragedy, *Laurentius, King of Clavinum*, the plot deals with the conflict between 'a faithful minister and an unscrupulous conspirator about a regency.' The reading aloud, the careful and competent translation from Greek into English, were all broadly related to the English political scene. At fourteen (1773) he was entered for Pembroke College, Cambridge; 'too young,' as Chatham wrote to the Senior Tutor, 'for the irregularities of a man, I trust, he will not, on the other hand, prove troublesome by the Puerile sallies of a Boy.' At Cambridge he matured and widened his knowledge of the classics, so that he always appeared a more considerable scholar than his father. After his father's death he entered Lincoln's Inn and was called to the Bar. That he would sooner or later enter politics went without saying. Through the mediation of the Duke of Rutland, Sir James Lowther procured his election as a member of Parliament for Appleby.

George III's efforts to find a minister who would follow his policy and command a majority in the House of Commons after North's resignation in 1782 had so far proved unavailing. He had been obliged to fall back on Rockingham and the malcontent Whigs whom he disliked. The formation of the new ministry has been called the end of the so-called personal experiments.

### *Shelburne*

That George III had no wish to accept Rockingham or Fox as his Secretary of State is unquestionable, but there is no doubt that he thought of what he had done as a temporary stop-gap. Lord Shelburne served the King's interests in the Cabinet; even more watchful was the sycophantic Lord Chancellor, Thurlow. Divisions within the Cabinet caused Rockingham anxiety and numbered the days of the ministry, even before the Prime Minister's sudden death brought it to an end.

Delighted at this providential event, the King freed himself from Fox and gave office to Shelburne. In many ways the most enigmatic among contemporary politicians, very talented, witty and cultured, he was perhaps the most detested and distrusted man of his times, dubbed the 'Jesuit of Berkeley Square.' Politically, he was a follower of Chatham, suspicious of royal influence but far more opposed to the control of Britain by a phalanx of Whig peers. His position was decidedly weak, for he held office only by the will of the King. Pitt first took office as Chancellor of the Exchequer in this ministry, even in his short tenure as a minister revealing that honesty of principle which distinguished him and his father among their contemporaries. But he saw, as everyone, except the first minister himself, saw, that the conjunction of opposing forces was overwhelming. He made a vain effort to win over Fox to persuade him to re-enter the ministry, but Fox would not serve under Shelburne and Pitt would not betray his chief. From this time forward Fox was Pitt's most persistent opponent. On February 24th, 1783, Shelburne resigned.

Once again George III was placed in a dilemma. For a few weeks he sought to find a solution personally pleasing to himself, but in vain. He disliked the idea of a Fox-North coalition, for he could not forgive Fox his bitter attacks nor North the seeming betrayal of the policy which he had adopted during the years in which he had the King's confidence. He employed every possible device, even offering the Treasury to Pitt—who saw that the moment was inopportune and refused—before he at last summoned the Duke of Portland to take that office in April, 1783.

### *The Younger Pitt*

Portland, a great Whig nobleman, was the obvious shadow for North and Fox, who became the two Secretaries of State. The history of the Fox-North coalition is instructive. It revealed the loose lines of party allegiance. The country was governed, as Fox and North both recognised, by a combination of great families who might be separated temporarily from each other by questions of expediency, principle or interest. 'My friendships,' said Fox, 'are perpetual, my enmities are not so.' It also showed that the royal power was still very considerable. Cabinet secrets hitherto conveyed back to the King by Lord Thurlow (described, incidentally, by the Republican Thelwall as a man with the Norman Conquest in his eyebrow and the Feudal System in every feature of his face), were now relayed to George by the Lord President Stormont. The climax came with Fox's India Bill. The King let it be known that a vote against the government was a vote for his favour and so induced the Lords to reject it. The following night the Secretaries of State were ordered to return their seals of office, while Pitt was given the insuperably difficult task of forming a ministry.

Pitt's appointment as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer was in perfect accord with the ideas which George III held about government. Pitt could lead a ministry irrespective of party allegiance, and even of parliamentary approval, which would carry out a national policy. His position in the House of Commons was so weak that men called his ministry a 'mince-pie administration which would end with the Christmas holidays'. At the end of the winter, however, after battling with the parliamentary opposition for three months, Pitt agreed to a dissolution of Parliament and a general election. The election of 1784 resulted in an astonishing parliamentary *volte-face*. Fox's followers, his 'martyrs' as some called them, fell to the tune of one hundred and sixty, leaving Pitt with a clear majority. Earlier historians described this as the voters' reaction from an unprincipled and corrupt Parliament to an honest and freely-elected assembly. Nothing could be further from the truth. While the electorate undoubtedly reacted favourably to

### *The General Election, 1784*

'Billy' Pitt, the weight of the Crown's influence was the determining factor in bringing about so striking a change. The election was conducted throughout on Pitt's behalf, mainly by the efforts of John Robinson, a former Secretary of the Treasury in North's ministry, with such skill and ingenuity that the final result could be estimated beforehand with a very marked degree of accuracy.

What then is the significance of the long seventeen years' administration that had started so inauspiciously in December 1783? In the first place it was a reaffirmation of George III's own theory of government. It is obvious that the general election of 1784 was first and foremost a victory for the Crown. Throughout the coming years George's influence remained considerable; he continued to criticise and oppose the Cabinet's policy on all kinds of issues, and to make appointments to it. His refusal to consider Roman Catholic Emancipation forced Pitt's own resignation in 1801 and on Pitt's return to office he insisted successfully on the exclusion of Fox from the ministry. Indeed, Pitt's own ascendancy partly depended on the way that he was allowed to use the patronage which still remained to the King after the abolition of the sinecures. No less than eighty-seven new peers were created during the ministry, partly as a reward for services rendered and partly to gain followers in the Lords who would assail the powerful opposition party. At first, therefore, the list contained a high percentage of men who had great influence in the constituencies, including Sir James Lowther. Later it was much broadened and included men of note and varied ability. Without George III's goodwill Pitt would have been helpless; hence the fact that he prepared to return to the Bar in 1788, when it was believed that the King might become incurably insane. But the apparent success of the royal policy only represented one side of the question.

Pitt's long tenure of office was also notable for the increasing crystallisation of the Cabinet system and of the office of Prime Minister. Although the King continued to take a profound interest in Parliament and its activities, his bad health resulted in periodic interruptions. Naturally, on such occasions the

### *The Younger Pitt*

Cabinet had to work out its own policy and the leading minister, a man of great personality and decision, became the Prime Minister. Again there were clear signs that the Cabinet was beginning to have greater form and substance. In the Regency Crisis of 1788 Lord Chancellor Thurlow had 'ratted' to the Prince of Wales, only to return as soon as he saw that the crisis was passing.<sup>1</sup> Pitt found it increasingly difficult to endure Thurlow's perpetual opposition, and in 1792 told the King that he must decide between Thurlow and himself. George thereupon instructed Thurlow to return the Great Seal. This was an obvious step in the direction of greater Cabinet solidarity.

Pitt's genius was obscured by the incompleteness of his financial measures and the disasters of war, but a close analysis of his services to his country in peace and war reveals the extent of his talents and, to some degree, the measure of his foresight. If events had not upset his planning he would have been the greatest of English finance ministers, while the defects of his foreign policy might have been less apparent if he had not held office at so critical a time in the world's history.

And what of this man Pitt who was called to office at twenty-four and died exhausted at forty-six? He inherited his father's eloquence, something of his reserve and pride, his mastery and comprehension of detail, his perception of final principles and his sublime self-confidence. His portrait as a young man suggests grace rather than personality, a verdict supported by contemporaries who found his reserve chilling and thought him unimpressive until he began to speak; that of a later period (by Hoppner) expresses disillusion and fatigue. His loyal friend, the ever-attractive Wilberforce, could not help exclaiming 'a vile picture—his face anxious, diseased, reddened with wine, and soured and irritated by disappointment. Poor fellow, how unlike my youthful Pitt!' The youthful Pitt was still full of *joie de vivre*, delighting in 'foyning' and the wit and wine of

<sup>1</sup> This was the occasion of Thurlow's speech touching on his gratitude to George III for all his services, 'which whenever I forget may God forget me' which prompted Wilkes to say 'Forget you! He'll see you damned first'

### *Economic Measures*

high society, especially in the company of his club at Goostree's. There was indeed a singular attraction about the portrait of the man in his earlier years, he had a balanced judgment, infinite capacity for taking pains, was industrious, conscientious (except at letter-writing), honest, a cheerful and delightful companion with his intimates. And, above all, he possessed that extra and very nearly undefinable quality of 'genius.' As the years passed there was some change. Always physically delicate, his body could not withstand the constant strain. There was some measure of disillusionment, a relaxation of grasp, and in the last year, a suggestion of growing incapacity. But until the ill-health which dogged all his life won its final victory, the essential Pitt remained the same, a man magnificently gifted, competent and capable, in domestic affairs possessed of great foresight, such a man whose gifts the experienced King was forced to recognise, though there were occasions when he hardly appeared to appreciate them.

#### *2. Economic measures*

The economic recovery of the country after a disastrous war and a series of short-lived ministries formed Pitt's main task. In the eight years that followed his appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer, the country's trade once more flourished, the value of investments increased despite the Dutch withdrawals, industry was active, bread was cheap. In part this was a result of events outside his control, but his wisdom and the stimulating effect of his policy fostered national prosperity. And this is what really constitutes Pitt's claim to greatness.

The country's finances were in a bad way, for the war had added another £115,000,000 to the national debt. It was Pitt's first object to make the revenue sufficient to meet the national requirements. An immediate deficit of £6,000,000 was met by a loan; he did away with the old method of raising money by dividing the loan among privileged subscribers by putting it



### *The Younger Pitt*

up to public competition; obviously fairer, more satisfactory and less expensive. He then instituted additional taxes on articles ranging from racehorses to candles. People grumbled but paid.

One would think there's not room one new impost to put  
From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot.  
Like Job, thus John Bull his condition deplores,  
Very patient, indeed, and all covered with sores.

This extra taxation served its purpose and enabled Pitt to balance the budget.

He recognised that loans and new taxes were not in themselves the best method of repairing a country's finances. The nation's credit could be best restored by lowering the national debt and increasing the country's trade to the maximum extent. It was with this object in mind that he instituted the Sinking Fund. The remedial measures so far adopted had proved satisfactory and he could in an ordinary year safely estimate that the Budget would show an annual saving of a million pounds. This would provide the foundation for the Sinking Fund, to which a further quarter of a million would be added at each quarter of the year for the purchase of stock. As the Fund would accumulate at compound interest, Pitt hoped to extinguish much of the national debt. These high hopes were doomed to black disappointment. The outbreak of the Revolutionary Wars entirely changed the situation as war expenditure naturally caused a deficit instead of a surplus. Pitt was, moreover, unduly optimistic about the outcome and length of the war, and rather than suspend the Sinking Fund he preferred to borrow money at a 'high rate of interest in order to reduce a debt at a low rate of interest'. In principle, then, the success of the Fund depended less on the uninterrupted operation of the compound interest than on the excess of revenue over expenditure. Thus Pitt's plan failed as soon as the Budget became unbalanced, in spite of the fact that £10,000,000 of debt had been liquidated by 1793.

But all this as yet lay in the future. In 1784 he took another but less important step forward in the regulation of revenue by

### *Pitt's Financial Measures*

introducing a bill for the consolidation of the Customs and Excise. The present system was haphazard and puzzling. Pitt abolished the existing duties and replaced them by a single duty on each article. The bill only resulted in a slight increase in revenue, but it simplified a very complex system to the benefit of commerce.

The ultimate success of all these measures depended on the prosperity of the country. There would be no surplus to pay into the Sinking Fund if the revenue did not come up to expectations nor could this occur if the country's trade and credit were at a low ebb. Pitt was convinced that the freer the intercourse between countries, the fewer the tariff barriers, the greater would be the volume of trade and the circulation of riches throughout the whole community, as Adam Smith had argued. In particular, he tried to arrange commercial treaties with Ireland and France. The Irish treaty was actually only a part of his general proposals for the amelioration of that poor land. Greater freedom of commerce would serve two purposes; it would benefit Irish trade and bring Irish merchants into friendlier relations with their British counterparts. On February 22nd, 1785, he introduced his bill, but even his eloquence could not convince the manufacturers of Lancashire, who asserted that the bill would enable the Irish to undersell the English and so ruin industry. On May 12th Pitt brought forward a modified bill, binding the Irish Parliament in all that related to trade and commerce to the British Parliament. These concessions did little or nothing to allay discontent in England and, if anything, increased it in Ireland. Charles Fox attacked the bill in a striking speech, closing with the words, 'I will not barter English commerce for Irish slavery, that is not the price I would pay, nor is this the thing I would purchase.' The disagreement was so universal that Pitt decided reluctantly to withdraw his scheme.

Better fortune attended his negotiations with France. Anti-French feeling was still very prevalent, especially among the middle and lower classes, and was opposed to any form of negotiation with the country's century-old enemies. The Treaty

### *The Younger Pitt*

of Versailles provided that commissioners should be appointed to prepare a treaty but little or nothing had so far been done. In 1785 there was so great an outcry in France at the number of British goods smuggled into the country that the government decided to limit the legal trade with Britain. Pitt realised that retaliatory measures could benefit neither country, and sent Sir William Eden to arrange a trade treaty. Concluded on September 26th, 1786, it reduced the duties on many articles and placed each country *vis-à-vis* the other in the position of a favoured nation. The bill was much criticised in France and Britain, but it justified itself by the increased amount of commerce between the two countries which occurred before the storm of revolution and war brought this particular aspect of Pitt's work to an end.

Pitt's legislation revealed great promise for the future, but its results often fell short of his intentions and hopes. Two widely-different measures which never came to fruition in his lifetime were directed towards the reform of Parliament<sup>1</sup> and the abolition of the slave trade. As the friend of Wilberforce, Pitt was constant in his support of the measure for doing away with this iniquitous traffic until the last few hectic years of war often forced his attention to weightier matters. He only attempted the reform of Parliament once after he became head of the ministry. Despite George III's known disapproval, he introduced a moderate measure of reform in 1785. If it had become law thirty-six rotten boroughs would have been disfranchised and the vacant seats given to the counties, London and Westminster. It was also proposed to extend the right to vote to all copyholders and householders in towns. The bill reflected the careful idealism of the wealthy landlord class rather than the enthusiasm of the democrat. Able speeches against it were made by North (who emphasised the lack of enthusiasm in the country), by Fox (who attacked,

<sup>1</sup> The movement had already gained many supporters, especially in the north where the energetic parson, Christopher Wyvill (1740-1822) had spurred on the Yorkshire Association to petition Parliament for better representation in 1780. Jeremy Bentham's *Fragment on Government* (1776) had criticised Blackstone's eulogistic view of the Constitution.

### *The Foreign Policy of Pitt, 1784-1792*

acutely, the idea of monetary compensation to the owners of the disfranchised boroughs on the ground that the franchise was a trust, not a property), and by Burke. Leave to bring in the measure was refused by 248 to 174 votes, and Pitt abandoned his proposals. It was a final decision. For the French Revolution, which made men identify reform with revolution, affected a change in Pitt's own ideas and so postponed any other bill for a generation.

But, in general, Pitt was notably successful during the years of peace. He had fostered the country's commerce; he had stabilised its finances. He had done much to encourage moderate reform in all directions. He had provided for colonial government; the India Act of 1784 and the Canada Constitutional Act of 1791 were both important achievements. It might have been thought that the country was entering a much-needed period of prolonged peace and prosperity, and this seems to have been Pitt's opinion. But, unfortunately for Pitt and the nation, the world was on the eve of far-reaching changes which were bound in the long run to dwarf all the positive measures of the ministry. He who was by nature so well suited to be a great peace minister was by the irony of fate compelled to guide the country during its, as yet, greatest war.

### *3. The foreign policy of Pitt, 1784-1792*

Pitt was a competent but not a great Foreign Minister. His mind was not tortuous enough, neither calculating nor realistic enough to tread successfully the paths which a Kaunitz or a Talleyrand trod with such worldly skill. Above all, his foreign policy must be regarded as an aspect of his domestic policy; George III himself put the situation bluntly enough when he wrote to Carmarthen in 1784: 'Till I see this country in a situation more respectable as to Army, Navy, and Finances, I cannot think anything that may draw us into troubled waters

### *The Younger Pitt*

either safe or rational.' Peace was England's supreme interest, and to its maintenance Pitt devoted all his energies. There was something to be said for this policy, supposing he was fully aware of what was happening on the Continent. Superficially, he realised the trend of events and sought to maintain a balance of power, but he could not foresee, nor can he be blamed justly for this, that the French Revolution would overthrow the equilibrium for which he was working. Thus, while his foreign policy was competent and raised the prestige of Britain at home and abroad, it lacked the farseeing touch which distinguishes the really great statesman.

Despite the disadvantages under which Pitt laboured, British prestige undoubtedly recovered from the severe blow which it had suffered as a result of the disastrous closure to the War of American Independence. This was a result of Pitt's cautious handling of the situation, and in particular of his protection of British interests where the balance of power in Europe made this essential. The situation in 1784 was difficult. The country had emerged from the long war faced by an array of states determined to keep her in isolation. Russia and Austria's interests were centred in eastern Europe, and chiefly concerned with the extension of their territory towards Poland, and the Balkans at the expense of Turkey. The cynical, ageing Frederick of Prussia had never forgiven Britain's apparent desertion in 1762, and was in any case wrapped up in his plans for thwarting Joseph II of Austria and for protecting Prussia's interests in Germany by forming a *Fürstenbund* or league of German princes. Holland was hostile, impoverished and divided by political rivalry. Spain, of late greatly enhanced in power and prestige owing to the wise rule of Charles III, still looked askance at British imperialism. France's position was less certain. Her King, Louis XVI, was married to an Austrian princess, Marie Antoinette, and her ministers retained their old ambitions, but there were signs, especially when Vergennes was Foreign Minister, that the country was not wholly averse to a reconciliation with Britain. Nevertheless the general situation was gloomy when Pitt took office.

### *French Designs on the Low Countries*

Pitt did much to strengthen Britain's standing on the Continent in the years that followed. The commercial treaty of 1786 with France helped to bring the two countries closer together and to support the strong social ties by diplomatic understanding. Again Pitt managed to thwart French designs on the Low Countries. He gained the friendship of the great Frederick's successor and brought Prussia into alliance with Holland. Finally he had prevented war from breaking out with Spain without giving up the claim which had provoked the trouble. These were considerable achievements which would have raised Pitt's fame much higher if all had not been forgotten in the cataclysm which came from France.

Britain had a traditional interest in the independence and well-being of the United Provinces. Pitt believed that the French wished to control Holland in order to get possession of the riches of the Dutch East Indies, and so successfully challenge the British position in the Far East. The situation was further complicated by the acute divisions inside Holland, on the one side there was the party of the Stadtholder, bovine William V and his intelligent wife, Wilhelmine, a Prussian princess, which represented the centralist idea of government and the pro-British faction, and on the other there was an increasingly virile Republican party, representing provincial and separatist interests, and subsidised by French money. The equilibrium was further disturbed by an attempt made by the Emperor Joseph II to enhance the prosperity of the Austrian Netherlands by opening the Scheldt (which would free the trade of Antwerp), this had been frustrated by French diplomacy (Treaty of Fontainebleau, 1785). The diplomatic victory which the French had won raised their prestige in Holland and so intensified the Republican demands for the abdication of the Stadtholder, feeling had become so bitter that the display of the Orange favour was dangerous, even carrots had to be clothed in their native dirt. The British ambassador, able Sir James Harris, had done everything in his power to encourage the Stadtholder's party to stem the growing influence which the French wielded in Holland.

### *The Younger Pitt*

What was needed to clinch the matter was an Anglo-Prussian alliance which would mean that there would be sufficient foreign pressure to counteract French influence in Dutch politics.

The omens were very far from favourable. Czarina Catherine of Russia stood by Austria and only agreed to use her influence against France if the Elector of Hanover (i.e. George III) would withdraw from Prussia's League of German Princes, the *Furstenbund*. As this proved unavailing, an appeal was made to Frederick himself, but, as 'old sour-puss' told Lord Cornwallis, he was too old to join in an alliance, even if it would help his own niece, which might lead to a general war. The situation was indeed saved by the accession of his nephew, Frederick William II, to the Prussian throne, the suspension of the Stadtholder from his authority and the arrest, even if a temporary measure, of the Stadtholder's wife, the Prussian princess Carmarthen, the British Secretary of State, at least saw the force of this incident. 'If the King, her brother, is not the dirtiest and shabbiest of Kings, he must resent it' He did. Frederick William demanded satisfaction for the insult to his sister and when the authorities supported by France refused this, he concluded an alliance with Britain. The English fleet was to support the Prussian army which shortly afterwards crossed the Dutch frontier and restored the Stadtholder. Would the French intervene? Pitt feared this and took precautions, but on October 27th, 1787, they agreed to remain neutral. The crisis had one significant after-effect, a treaty of alliance between England, Holland and Prussia, formed to resist French ambitions or those of any other power which sought to disturb the somewhat precarious equilibrium of Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Equal success attended Pitt in the affair of Nootka Sound. Nootka Sound was a delightful natural harbour on the western coast of Vancouver Island, visited by Captain Cook in 1778. Ten years later John Meeres bought a piece of land there from

<sup>1</sup> The close understanding with the Stadtholder was also a factor which led in the long run to the acquisition by Britain of Dutch South Africa.

### *The Nootka Sound Dispute*

the local Indian chief and established a small settlement. Next year more settlers arrived to trade with the Indians for furs and ginseng (a plant used as a Chinese drug). Technically the Spaniards claimed all territory washed by the Pacific Ocean as far north as latitude 60 degrees, and so were perfectly correct, in their own opinion, in sending Captain Martinez to vindicate the Spanish claim to Nootka Sound. Martinez took possession of the British settlement and of the British ships which so conveniently played into his hands on their arrival. Meeres appealed to the British government in January, 1790, which immediately informed the Spanish authorities that their claim was unwarranted. Both countries began to prepare for war. Britain invoked the Triple Alliance and received favourable replies from her allies, Holland and Prussia. At this juncture Pitt was helped by the French Revolution, for whereas the French ministers would have been willing to help Spain, the new French National Assembly thought otherwise. The Spanish minister, Florida Blanca, who had raised a big loan and had sought help from the United States, Austria and Russia, as well as from France, eventually agreed to negotiate. The Nootka Sound dispute was settled on October 28th, 1790, to the advantage of Great Britain who recovered the disputed territory.

Pitt's efforts in Central Europe were far less successful. Faced by the ambitious Catherine the Great, he proved unable to cope successfully with the intricacies of her unscrupulous diplomacy (though it might be added that he did something to save Sweden from possible ruin). Allied with Prussia, he tried to prevent the Empress from annexing the district of Oczakoff from the Turks, in vain. His Eastern policy was partly based on a faulty reading of the situation. In alliance with Prussia, he hoped to protect Sweden and Poland against the designs of Russia. But Prussia was a broken reed. Disappointed by Britain's failure to avert the annexation of Oczakoff, she proved willing to compromise her original intentions by taking her share of Polish territory in the Partitions of 1793 and 1795. By this time, however, Pitt was concerned with events nearer home,



### *The Younger Pitt*

in particular with the Revolution which threatened to arrest all his plans in domestic and foreign politics alike.

#### 4 *The rivalry of Charles James Fox*

When Pitt died in 1806, the Commons passed a motion to give him a state funeral and to erect a public monument in his honour in Westminster Abbey. Among the eighty-nine members who voted against the proposal was Charles James Fox. This vote was fitting and symbolic since he had been Pitt's most vehement and talented opponent. Built, like Pitt, on a monumental scale (not physically but mentally), he inherited in his case vices which dissipated his energy and so prevented him from presenting a positive programme which would bring about Pitt's downfall. Possessed of broad vision, he yet made repeated blunders in matters of detail.

His father was the elder Pitt's rival, Henry Fox, later Lord Holland, a man of considerable ability and few scruples. From Eton, Charles had gone to Oxford where he imbibed a love of classical literature which never left him, and at nineteen (in 1768) he was elected a member of Parliament. His sociable nature and his real ability soon attracted attention and led to the offer of a Junior Lordship of the Admiralty from North in 1770. Disagreement with North led to a breach and an alliance with the Rockingham Whigs; he served as Foreign Secretary under Rockingham but resigned rather than act under his successor, the enigmatic Shelburne. There followed the historic *volte-face* which saw Fox once again working in close co-operation with North in the notorious Coalition of 1783. After the ministry's fall, largely occasioned by Fox's India Bill, he went into opposition, and remained there until 1806.

This long period of opposition drew out Fox's exceptional gifts and disclosed the progressive nature of his ideals. There was a period of four years (1797-1801) when the defeat of a motion in favour of parliamentary reform led to a temporary

retirement from political life, a 'secession' as ludicrous as it was unpatriotic. Apart from this he was incessantly active. He was hampered by his own life and his associates. He was a great roué in an age of roués, this served to rob him of moral leadership. His close friendship with the Prince of Wales (and so with the 'reversionary interests of Carlton House) lost him political standing in the country. Many people therefore distrusted him. Gibbon, hearing of his breach with North, commented. 'Charles Fox is commenced patriot and is already attempting to pronounce the words "country," "liberty," "corruption," with what success, time will discover' But there was, curiously enough, an underlying enthusiasm, a progressive idealism, behind the amusing sophistication which accounted for so much of his attraction and made even Pitt speak of the 'wand of the magician' He attacked the King's American policy, he split his party by his zeal for parliamentary reform and by the enthusiasm with which he greeted the French Revolution. Later he urged the necessity for peace with France, and expressed his abhorrence of the ways adopted by the government for suppressing discontent and dealing with sedition. 'You have gone,' he told the Commons, 'upon the principles of slavery in all your proceedings, you neglect . the foundation of all legitimate government, the rights of the people' He even thought highly of Napoleon, and only with a sigh was at long last compelled to recognise the illimitable nature of his imperial ambitions. Possibly some of this was factious, some mistaken, but there was this strain of idealism and humanitarianism, instanced in his enthusiastic support for Wilberforce's motions against the slave trade, which lightens the bleaker aspects of his career.

Throughout he was Pitt's greatest rival. Party differences do not account entirely for the virulence of the long struggle. There was something antipathetic in the characters of the two men, Pitt was cold, reserved, moderate, Fox sociable, gay, warm, perhaps irresponsible. The cares of office had unduly sobered Pitt, Fox remained improvident, schoolboyish. Fox's opposition

### *The Younger Pitt*

was unrelenting Pitt's supposed sympathy, he said, with progressive opinion was illusory. Bludgeon and persecution were the weapons with which he treated the champions of progress. His foreign policy was contemptible, his abilities as a war minister were inferior. Fox continued to plead for peace, led the agitation against the Treason and Sedition Bills of 1795, seconded the Grey motion for parliamentary reform, and exposed the tyranny of Crown and Bench in the Scotch cases of Muir and Palmer; he hoped for the better treatment of Ireland and urged forward Roman Catholic Emancipation. While he did but deny that Pitt was an honest man, he could not conceal his relief that his policy was leading to the ruin of the country. It was hardly surprising that he should have refused to give his support to the motion to do honour to the dead statesman. It was in one sense a sign of the political honesty which distinguished him.

## CHAPTER XIV

### BRITAIN AT WAR, 1793-1815

#### 1. *Britain and the French Revolution*

The impact which the French Revolution made on English life and opinion was naturally considerable. The first feeling that Englishmen experienced when they heard of the fall of the Bastille, of the abolition of feudal privilege and the setting up of a constitutional monarchy was one of profound relief, satisfaction and even approval. For there can have been few Englishmen who did not feel grimly satisfied that the traditional enemy had at last been overwhelmed by internal trouble. Many Englishmen also felt flattered that the French should now be adopting a form of government similar in nature to that which they had enjoyed since 1689. In 1790 even Pitt himself predicted that freedom would be restored in France, and with it that particular freedom which 'it is my duty as an Englishman peculiarly to cherish, nor can I . . . regard with envious eyes, an approximation in neighbouring states to those sentiments which are the characteristic features of every British subject'. Others went much further in their praise. Fox, full as he was of 'prejudice for ancient families,' described the fall of the Bastille as 'How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world, and how much the best,' and the draft of the new French Constitution as 'the most stupendous and glorious edifice of liberty which has been erected on the foundation of human integrity in any time or country.'

Dissenters, who still suffered under many disabilities, and poets were the most enthusiastic. Old Dr Price, addressing the first meeting of the London Revolution Society in November, 1789, thanked God that he had lived to witness thirty million people throw off the fetters which bound them and embrace

liberty 'You cannot,' he told his listeners, 'hold the world in darkness' while the peoples are 'starting from sleep, breaking their fetters, and claiming justice from the oppressor' There was also much in the Revolution to appeal to the latent romanticism of the poet Robert Burns, prevented from expressing his opinion too openly by reason of his office as a government employee, once went so far as to send the guns which he had taken from a captured smuggler to the French Convention, a notion which hardly met with the approval of the Board of Excise The visionary William Blake saw 'rank upon rank' in his *French Revolution* calling all nations to witness and hope Wordsworth found in the events of 1789-1790 an influence which lent a lyrical fire to his writings Coleridge, still a schoolboy at Christ's Hospital, wrote verses on the fall of the Bastille Southey, expelled from Westminster for defiance of authority in 1792, composed long pedestrian poems, *Joan of Arc* and *Wat Tyler*, whose theme was essentially revolutionary. Much later, a die-hard Tory, he wrote (1824): 'Few persons . . . can conceive or comprehend what the memory of the French Revolution was, nor what a visionary world seemed to open upon those who were just entering it Old things seemed passing away, and nothing was dreamt of but the regeneration of the human race' Within a comparatively short period of time, many of these 'disaffected' Englishmen had become patriotic Tories, but such was their early enthusiasm, when

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven

The Radical politicians and writers formed the third group affected by the French Revolution Their private lives were often discreditable and their ideas fantastic, but they had a passionate sense of human justice They were united by little else except their championship of the common man and even that often failed to resolve their constant wranglings In its origin the early Radical movement was touched by many different events, the Wilkesite agitation, the American Revolution, the thought of the French 'philosophes' and the early parliamentary reform

### *Tom Paine and the Godwins*

movement Its natural leader was Horne Tooke, behind whose sarcasm and rascality there was a great deal of trenchant good sense and a passionate belief in the rights of the ordinary man, for which indeed he suffered imprisonment in later years Its most representative thinkers were Tom Paine and William Godwin Paine was a powerful but unattractive figure, his private life was disreputable and sordid Frequently drunk, filthy, quarrelsome, brutal to the woman he had seduced from her husband, he makes no claim on our sympathy, and yet his *Rights of Man* was a masterly pamphlet Man, he said, is confronted by two alternatives, a democratic, elected government, or government by kings The latter, like that of priests, is rule by imposture, its object the exploitation of the people The Gospel of the Revolution has opened up a new era in human and political relationship William Godwin and his wife were more idealistic Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin's reply to Burke, *The Rights of Men*, lacked logic and impartiality, but was transmuted by passionate feeling Her husband's *Political Justice*, which dealt with the new Jerusalem heralded by the Revolution, had more lasting distinction 'There is,' he said, 'a morning of reason rising upon man on the subject of government that has not appeared before' When we enter the world 'we are neither virtuous nor vicious,' and must therefore be capable of achieving perfection in government if we would only use the powers of reason Godwin's faith in the 'invulnerable phalanx of reason' lays at the base of all his work Hitherto, government has been framed to exploit mankind, 'legislation is in almost every country grossly the favourer of the rich against the poor' But man has the remedy in his own hands, literature, education and justice are the means by which the new order of society can be introduced And the Revolution is the first glowing manifestation of justice at work As man progresses, so his moral and political theories will change, his conception of sin and error will disappear as the millennium arrives Godwin's work suffers from its intellectual bias, its analysis of society is perhaps clearer than its recommendations. It is indeed implicitly anarchistic. But, with all its

defects, it mirrors faithfully the optimism of the time 'A new world,' as Hazlitt wrote about Thomas Holcroft's view of the Revolution, 'was opening to the astonished sight. Scenes, lovely as hope can paint, dawned on the imagination; visions of unsullied bliss lulled the senses and hid the darkness of surrounding objects, rising in bright succession and endless gradations, like the steps of the ladder which was once set up on earth, and whose top reached to heaven.'

This early enthusiasm found practical embodiment in the revival of the movement for the reform of Parliament, and in the foundation of numerous Corresponding Societies for expressing sympathy with the aspirations of the French Revolutionaries; the Constitutional Society, the Society of the Friends of the People, the London Revolution Society and many others were founded. Some were more democratic than others, the Society of the Friends of the People, for instance, demanded a subscription of half-a-guinea, while the London Revolution Society levied a penny a week from the middle-class and working men who made up the majority of its members. Its founder, Thomas Hardy, ran a shoemaker's business at No. 9, Piccadilly. Its first manifesto emphasised the necessity for a thorough reform of Parliament and argued that each man has a natural right to political liberty. This formed the constant refrain of all the meetings and conventions held during the period. Their future success depended on the course and shape of the French Revolution.

The latter months of 1791 and the whole of 1792 were of critical importance, both for the Revolution itself and for the Revolution's influence in England. Events in France, more particularly the attempted flight of the Royal Family to Varennes (June, 1791), the Declaration of Pillnitz (August, 1791), and the Prussian invasion of France (Summer, 1792), followed by the September massacres which shocked civilised opinion throughout Europe, brought the fall of the monarchy nearer and nearer. Pitt was relatively unaffected, for as he watched Europe dissolve in the chaos of war, he reiterated his hopes of European peace, upon which Britain's financial stability depended. 'I am not,

*The French Declare War, 1793*

indeed,' he said in the Budget speech of February 17th, 1792, 'presumptuous enough to suppose that, when I name fifteen years, I am not naming a period in which events may arise which human foresight cannot reach . . . but unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country, when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than at the present moment' But if the minister could not estimate realistically the results of the deterioration in the relationships between the two countries, there were others who were alarmed by the course of events 'How could we ever be so deceived in the character of the French nation,' wrote Romilly after the September Massacres, 'as to think them capable of liberty? . . . One might as well think of establishing a republic of tigers in some forest of Africa' Meanwhile, the French under Dumouriez overran Belgium, defeated the Austrians at Jemappes, captured Brussels and opened the Scheldt (November 27th, 1792). Less than a month later the French issued a decree which was virtually an ultimatum to all existing governments Pitt could no longer ignore either the threat to British commercial interests caused by the opening of the Scheldt, nor the affront to the balance of power resulting from the annexation of the Austrian Netherlands 'England,' said Grenville, 'will never see with indifference that France shall make herself . . . sovereign of the Low Countries, or the general arbitress of the rights and liberties of Europe' On the first day of the new year (1793), a Breton sailor, Vice-Admiral de Kersaint, told the Convention that the French should attack British commerce and invade the country so that the terms of peace might be dictated on the 'ruins of the Tower of London.' The trial and execution of King Louis XVI sent a shudder of horror through millions of British people, and led to the return of the French envoy, Chauvelin, to France. Less than a week later (February 1st, 1793), the French declared war against Britain 'It now remains to be seen,' said Pitt, 'whether, under Providence, the efforts of a free, brave, loyal and happy people . . . will not be successful in checking the progress of a system the principles of which, if not opposed, threaten the



most fatal consequences to the tranquillity of this country, the security of its allies, the good order of every European government, and the happiness of the whole human race'

While events were moving towards war, there had been an astonishing revulsion against the Revolution in public opinion. Edmund Burke was the intellectual prophet of the change, in his *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790), *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (1791), and the later *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796). There could be no possible compromise with a regicide republic which had overthrown the vestiges of law and ordered society. Human society was an organic growth. The revolutionaries had cast aside tradition and cut free from the orderly development of civilisation. These opinions found a response in all classes, from the King, who said that every gentleman ought to read the *Reflections*, to the Birmingham mob which, spurred on by drink, money and a dislike of Dissenters, attacked Priestley's house and fired his laboratory, the finest in Europe. 'I cannot but feel better pleased,' wrote George III to Dundas, 'that Priestley is the sufferer for the doctrines he and his party have instilled'

The government could not ignore, nor would it have wished to ignore, the change in public opinion. With the outbreak of war what had hitherto been political heterodoxy became sedition and treachery. As early as May, 1792, the Cabinet had issued a proclamation warning people against seditious meetings and writings. Magistrates, stimulated by authority and supported by public opinion, fostered local patriotism by encouraging the foundation of local societies and the forwarding of loyal addresses. A Rev. William Winterbotham, Dissenter, had spoken somewhat ambiguously in a sermon preached on Guy Fawkes Day. A Dr. Maxwell of York had ordered 20,000 daggers. The villagers of Over and Nether Stowey, fascinated by the Wordsworths' strange visitors at Alfoxden (and alarmed by their propensity for taking walks in all weathers), told Lord Portland in 1797 that their house was the headquarters of French plotters. A government agent reported that the tenants there were 'a mischievous gang of disaffected English'. Far worse than the information so curiously

### *Government Measures against Sedition*

and variously gathered, was the period of summary prosecution which now began. A tutor of Jesus College, Cambridge, William Frend, was deprived of his degrees for his political opinions. Worse was to follow. In May, 1794, Parliament suspended Habeas Corpus, thus enabling the ministry to arrest many of the leading Radicals. The trials led in nearly every case to an acquittal and, with the leading exception of those conducted by the Scotch Lord Braxfield (the original of R. L. Stevenson's *Weir of Hermiston*), proved on the whole a happy witness to the excellence of British justice. The majority of the members of the Corresponding Societies were in fact honest idealists who had never wanted to use force (though pikes were stored in Downie's attic in Edinburgh), but they now stood suspect of treason. In 1795 Parliament passed the Treasonable Practices Bill and the Seditious Meetings Bill, which tightened up the law still further. Within two years, serious mutinies in the Fleet reminded the country of the continuing dangers of sedition. But by the beginning of the new century, whatever danger there had been was over.

For public opinion and, after 1796, Napoleon, had done their work well. The majority of the British people had been inoculated successfully against Revolution, reform was dead and the Corresponding Societies were moribund. 'I will tell you,' wrote the poet Cowper to William Hayley in 1793, 'what the French have done. They have made me weep for a king of France, which I never thought to do, and they have made me sick of the very name of liberty, which I never thought to be.' Except for a few disgruntled Radical politicians, and idealists like Thomas Spence or Charles Hall, the country was now united against the dictatorial ambitions of Napoleon.

### *2 The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*

By the irony of fate, Britain's greatest peace minister was involved in what was until the twentieth century her greatest war. Nor was Pitt really fitted to be a war minister. Dr. Holland Rose ✓

sums up Britain's situation in the years that follow: 'wholly unprepared Great Britain was engaged in a struggle of unsuspected magnitude and duration. Her methods were therefore empirical, her warfare tentative, her blunders colossal. Trusting inevitably to her allies, she saw them falter or fall away, a prey to the jealousies necessarily aroused by her policy of limited largesse on land and unlimited acquisitions at sea.' Pitt must bear some share of the blame for these early disasters, but he never lost sight of his ultimate objectives, victory and the restoration of peace, and in the darkest hour his courage and vision, like his father's half a century earlier, illumined and inspired the nation.

His war policy was plain. He must use the financial resources that he had built up in the years of peace to strengthen British naval supremacy and to subsidise the Continental powers. Neither of these two policies was particularly successful. He believed that the war with France was similar to earlier wars, he did not see that the France of the new order had a potency and an enthusiasm behind it which inevitably made its opponents appear political reactionaries. He reckoned that France must be near bankruptcy and that the war would as a result be of short duration. The campaigns were largely based on the same principles which his father had employed previously. Britain would keep the waters clear of French merchandise, make occasional raids on French positions nearer home and capture the French colonial possessions in the West Indies, whilst Britain's European allies bore the brunt of war on the Continent. These reckonings were fallible. The new French armies, organised by Carnot, were vigorous, enthusiastic, missionary; their officers were chosen by merit and distinction rather than by birth or seniority. The Revolution had transformed France from a state into a nation. Neither Pitt nor Grenville was well suited to keep together a Coalition of self-interested, hostile powers. Furthermore, the war situation showed that the efforts to reduce France were ill co-ordinated, poorly led and usually unsuccessful.

The course of events between 1793 and 1795 was singularly depressing. An attempt to retain Toulon in 1793, which was

### *The First Coalition*

then held by French Royalists, failed, weakening British prestige, stimulating France to further efforts and disclosing for the first time the latent genius of a young Corsican lieutenant, Napoleon Bonaparte. British efforts in the West Indies on which Pitt concentrated his attention cost the country heavy losses in men, money and material, and were, from the strategic point of view, singularly unrewarding. Nearer home, the First Coalition of powers hostile to France had been formed, including Holland, The Emperor, Prussia, Russia, Spain and Sardinia, but from the start each nation worked for its own end with an entire disregard of allied aims. Britain, as in 1756, concentrated on maintaining her naval supremacy. Russia was more interested in the fate of Poland than that of the Bourbons. Baron Thugut, the Austrian minister, was violently opposed to Prussia, whose King was not particularly averse to coming to terms with the common enemy if it suited him. Paralysed by discord, indifferently led, the allied armies' record against the imperfectly equipped but strongly enthusiastic French troops throughout 1794, 1795 and 1796 was lamentable. The French occupation of Holland, Bonaparte's successful campaign in Italy, the evacuation of the Mediterranean by the British fleet were apparent landmarks on the road to defeat, hardly redeemed by Howe's naval victory over the French on June 1st, 1794, or the occupation of the Dutch colony of the Cape in 1795. Pitt had to watch the slow disintegration of the Coalition which he had tried to build up. The Austrians evacuated Belgium and recouped themselves with territory in Poland, arguing cynically that Britain would have to buy back Austria's sea-board province by restoring her other conquests. In April, 1795, Prussia came to terms with France at Basle, agreeing to surrender her territories on the left bank of the Rhine to the French. The first Coalition had perished.

The events of 1796-1797 make no more palatable reading. With discontent growing at home, trouble brewing in Ireland and an increasingly difficult financial situation, Pitt was faced by a France that grew daily stronger. Spain made a defensive and offensive alliance with France in 1796. Strengthened by more

than fifty ships of the line, French naval forces in the Mediterranean compelled the withdrawal of the British squadron there, the alliance also weakened Britain's hold in the West Indies. Thus from the Scheldt to the Straits of Gibraltar, Britain was confronted by an increasingly tenacious foe, led by a man whose military genius daily became more apparent. In Europe, Austria, chastened by continuous military disaster, detached herself from her alliance with Britain in 1797 and signed the Treaty of Campo Formio. Whereas France had faced four great powers in 1793, four years later she had only one further rival to overthrow. Behind the screen of Campo Formio the Directory's plan for the reduction of Britain may now be perceived, for it reckoned that while the combined fleets of France, Spain and Holland engaged the British navy, invading forces could be landed in England and Ireland. The one bright patch amidst the encircling gloom of 1797 showed the futility of these and other preparations for invasion, for Admiral Jervis's victory off Cape St. Vincent in February reaffirmed British command of the seas. But even Britain's naval log was marked by failure when mutinies in the Fleet broke out at the Spithead and the Nore in April and May. Happily, the dangers passed, but they served to reinforce the general grimness of the year.

A momentous change had meanwhile taken place in France, for in September Bonaparte returned from his victorious campaigns in Italy to impose his imperious will on the Directory. The *coup d'état* served to perpetuate the war since it opened up the road to Napoleon's fast-developing ambitions. Henceforth, the war was to be dominated by his genius. He was less than forty years of age, commanding, precise in his judgments, skilled in his control of men. His military talents had already brought vast territory and great booty to his adopted country. The future was to reveal his administrative capacity. He was profoundly egotistical, while his belief in a controlling Destiny gave him immense self-confidence which, combined with a marked aptitude for seizing the right opportunity, played a prominent part in his rise to power. He was well served by an army

### *The Battle of the Nile*

whose loyalty was unquestionable and by the Gospel of Revolution which attracted the subject people of Europe. He appeared as yet the symbol of a youthful, strong and progressive nation.

Friendly and hostile plans of action henceforth followed in the wake of his splendid if eccentric initiative. Such was the case in 1798. After thinking seriously of invading Britain, Napoleon decided that Britain could be best crushed in the East, that here, as he told his soldiers, 'you will deal at England the surest and most effective blow, while waiting to give it the death blow'. After occupying various strategic islands in the Mediterranean, including Malta, he proceeded to Egypt, the stepping-stone to the riches of India, where he quickly shattered the armies of the Mameluke rulers. But his 'destiny' in the person of Nelson cut his hopes of a great Oriental triumph to pieces. Nelson's mastery is rarely seen to better advantage than in his great action in Aboukir Bay, where he cut off the French retreat and so forestalled Napoleon's plans. Furthermore, it restored the Mediterranean to the control of the British fleet.

The Battle of the Nile was followed by the formation of the Second Coalition, headed by Britain, Austria and Russia, but its patent deficiencies were soon revealed. It was no more satisfactorily welded together than the First. The Russians, under Suvarov, at first succeeded in driving the French from Northern Italy, but their efforts were soon checked by Masséna. In Holland a British force under the Duke of York collapsed under the triple disadvantage of poor strategy, Russian impetuosity and heavy rain. The Duke returned home, leaving the unfortunate Dutch to the mercy of the French and his Russian allies to the shelter of winter quarters in the Channel Islands. The acquisition of the Dutch fleet was the sole gain. In Russia itself, Catherine's heir, an embittered neurotic, Czar Paul, found increasing fault with his allies and growing admiration for Napoleon. The quarters provided for his troops in the Channel Islands were inadequate. Suravov told him that his armies were sacrificed in Switzerland to Austrian selfishness. Following earlier precedents, he decided to withdraw from the Coalition.

The allies might have found some satisfaction in the factious rule of the Directory under whose guidance France was drifting towards bankruptcy, but Bonaparte, eluding the vigilance of the British ships, managed to return to France. He saw the inadequacy of the Directory and took the government into his own hands as First Consul. Next year he made a sensational march over the Grand St Bernard Pass, smaller divisions going over the other Alpine passes to deceive the enemy, and defeated the Austrians on the plain of Marengo. This great victory, which was followed before the end of the year by Moreau's victory over the Archduke John at Hohenlinden, restored to Napoleon effective control over Italy and drove Austria out of the Coalition.

The remainder of 1799 and 1800 saw Britain principally concerned with holding her own, especially in the Mediterranean, and with protecting the faltering Ottoman Empire against the designs of Russia. For Czar Paul, persuaded by Napoleon that he might receive Malta, had drawn together Prussia and Denmark in the Armed Neutrality, a league which aimed to prevent the British, by force if needs be, from searching neutral vessels. But the Czar's hostility remained an interlude, arising partly from the insanity which made him the victim of a successful plot in March, 1801. France rather than Russia was the real enemy. The British capture of Malta, which had so annoyed the Czar, compelled the French to evacuate Syria and led to a resumption of hostilities in Egypt. These Mediterranean plans encouraged the King and Pitt to refuse the overtures for peace which Bonaparte transmitted to the courts of London and Vienna. Was Pitt wrong to do this? Certainly, the persistent demand, backed by George III, Grenville and Dundas, for the restoration of the French monarchy as an essential preliminary to peace was at least premature and probably unwise. But Pitt founded his refusal on two ideas, the probable impermanence of the regime set up by Bonaparte, 'this last adventurer in the lottery of revolutions,' and the worthlessness of any peace that could now be concluded. 'As a sincere lover of peace, I will not sacrifice it by grasping at the shadow, when the reality is not substantially

### *The Treaty of Amiens*

within my reach' Challenged by his Whig opponents to define his peace terms more closely, Pitt replied: 'In one word I can tell him that it is *Security*—security against a danger the greatest that ever threatened the world.' But eloquence by itself could not retard the course of events, within a year Pitt's disagreement with the King over Roman Catholic Emancipation had led to his resignation, and Napoleon's victories at Marengo and Hohenlinden had obliged Austria to sign the Treaty of Lunéville

The new ministry, weak as it was, decided to reopen the peace negotiations Its hand was temporarily strengthened by recent military and naval successes Ten days before the murder of Czar Paul removed Britain's principal foe in the North, Nelson had won a great victory over France's allies, the Danes. At the same time, the British forces in Egypt took Cairo and Alexandria and compelled the French evacuation of Egypt by the end of September, 1801. Such successes were vitally necessary, for the French were everywhere else successful in diplomacy and war At home, the First Consul had consolidated his position by concluding a Concordat with the Pope All who met him at this period of his life were impressed by his decisive energy, flashing, commanding eye and the intensity of his purpose Every land brought under French rule was now reaping a harvest wrought by efficient administration, in education and justice, in central and local government Within limits, the 'conquered' peoples regarded the ruler of France as a liberator rather than as an oppressor and his opponents as the relicts of outworn reaction.

The Treaty of Amiens, the preliminaries of which were signed on October 1st, 1801 (actually before news of the French evacuation of Egypt reached London), was both a compromise and an armistice. Britain retained Ceylon and Trinidad, but restored her other conquests, while France agreed to evacuate Naples, Rome and Egypt. The future of Malta constituted the chief bone of contention. It was agreed that Neapolitan troops should occupy the island before it was handed back to its previous owners the Grand Master and Knights of St. John The solution only imperfectly screened the grim realities of the situation Malta



was now an essential factor in Britain's control over the Mediterranean, and so in preventing the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire with all its possible repercussions on India. The Knights of St. John were a decayed chivalric order, powerless to resist French aggression. Britain was therefore very reluctant to surrender the island, especially as Bonaparte's intrigues in Italy, and Sébastiani's in the Levant, became more obvious and dangerous. Bonaparte's designs clearly implied control, if not possession, of Malta, and to these the British refusal to give it up, technically of doubtful legality, constituted a barrier. Thus the future was darkened from the very start.

The festivities and fireworks (a thunderstorm put paid to the illuminations in London) which greeted the news of the peace proved deceptive. 'This is a peace,' said the Whig Sheridan, 'which all men are glad of, but no man can be proud of.' The Dover and Calais packets, which began running on November 18th, 1801, were crowded with visitors to Paris. But the Treaty of Amiens did not provide a stable foundation for peace, it was no more than an anxious armistice. Britain retained Malta while Napoleon's power-politics flooded Europe. During the winter of 1802 and spring of 1803 the British ambassador, Lord Whitworth, avowed his readiness to recognise the remodelled Italian states on condition that the French evacuated Holland and Switzerland, acknowledged the integrity of Turkey and allowed England to keep Malta. The negotiations were at last concluded by a typically impetuous outburst by the First Consul at a public reception in the Tuileries Palace. Feeling in London was becoming as intransigent as feeling in Paris. Addington told Malmesbury that he would wait until France 'had heaped wrong upon wrong, and made her arrogant designs so notorious, and her views of unceasing aggrandisement so demonstrable as to leave no doubt on the public mind, nor a possibility of mistake on the part of the most uninformed man.' War was renewed on May 18th, 1803. 'It is really shocking,' said Nelson, 'that one animal should disturb the peace of Europe'; and he spoke for all Britain.

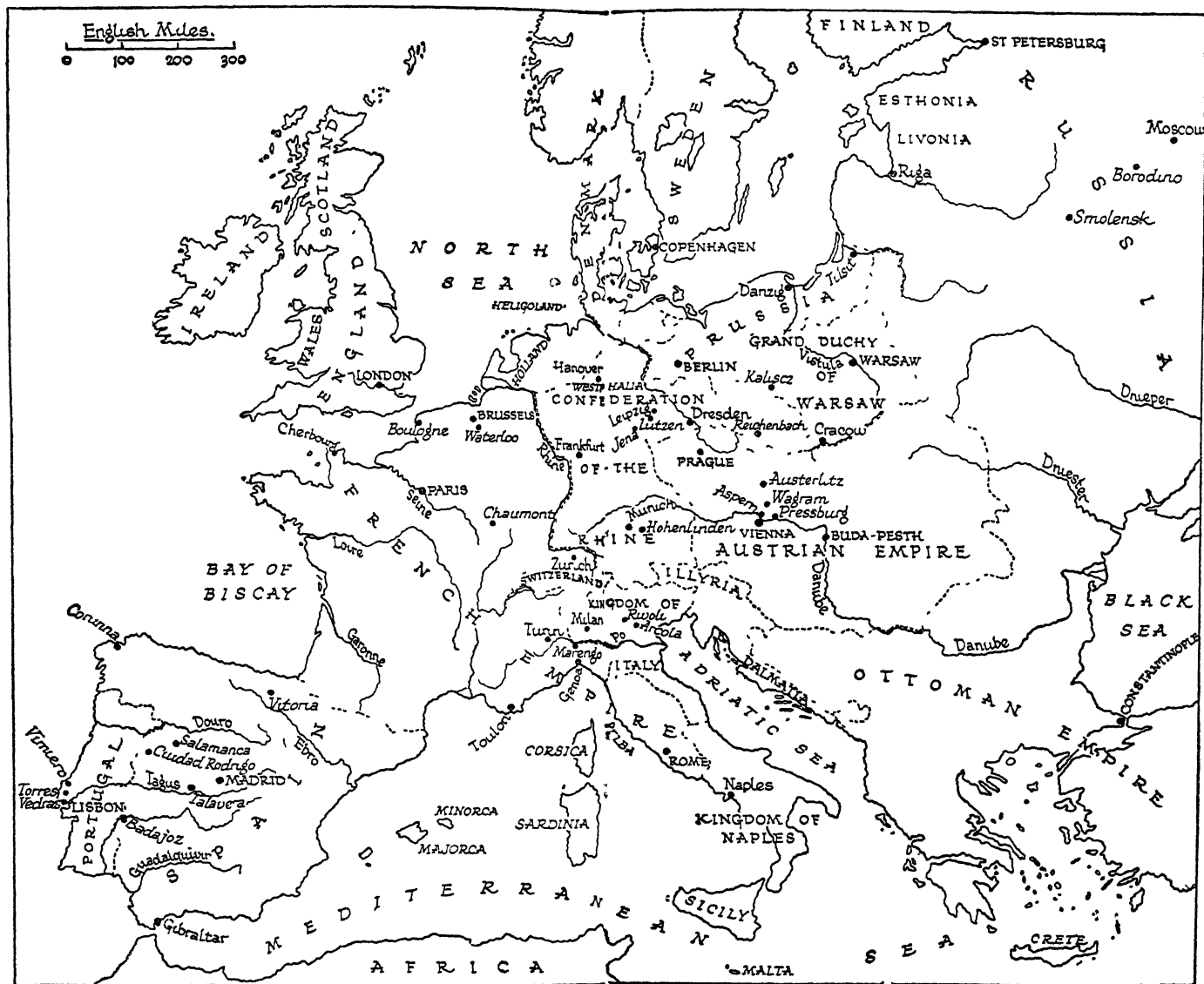
Pitt's return to office was an inevitable sequel to the renewal

### *Napoleon and the Invasion of England*

of the war Yet his ministry was weak and his own health was poor, while he was faced with greater problems than ever before Just over twenty miles from Walmer Castle, a fitting home for Britain's Prime Ministers in war-time, Napoleon began to drill his army and to build his flat-bottomed boats for the invasion of Britain, for he was now convinced that the conquest of England was an essential preliminary to the successful conclusion of his schemes for world domination. Pitt's plans for coping with this new danger followed the old model, the creation of another Coalition and the strengthening of the Navy Fear of invasion led to the building of Martello Towers along the coast, and to the formation of pioneer companies, armed with all kinds of weapons, to support the Regular Army. The King prepared to send his family to his old friend, Richard Hurd, the Bishop of Worcester While the gallant drilled, the more squeamish prepared to move further inland: 'I suppose,' wrote the Rev Thomas Twining, 'you will not ask me why I leave Colchester I leave it because I am afraid to stay in it Many have left, many more are preparing to leave it'

The history of the Third Coalition differed little from that of its predecessors, its formation was difficult and its conclusion disastrous Napoleon, shrewdly convinced that the invasion of England was still too much of a gamble, had left his 'baraque' at Boulogne, and by a series of speedy and skilful marches forced the surrender of Mack's 30,000 Austrians at Ulm on October 20th, 1805 (the day before Trafalgar), less than a month later occupied Vienna, and on December 2nd inflicted a crushing defeat on the combined Austro-Russian armies at Austerlitz The Third Coalition had disintegrated more rapidly than its predecessors. On December 6th, France and Austria signed an armistice—the news filtering through to London was not confirmed officially until December 29th—followed by the definitive Peace of Pressburg It was now that Napoleon's ideas of aggrandising his brothers, typical of Corsican family feeling, sprang into being, entailing the creation of new states, the ejection of old royal families and all the other appanages of that megalomaniac dream





### *Britain at War, 1793-1815*

which was from now onwards to draw him towards Waterloo. With the Holy Roman Empire in dissolution, the Russian armies withdrew temporarily to the east, while the dismal and selfish Hohenzollern was temporarily bought off by the bribe of Hanover.

Trafalgar, fought on October 21st, 1805, was the one redeeming feature and Britain's crowning mercy, for even if Napoleon had momentarily given up his idea of invasion before the battle was fought, the decisive nature of Nelson's victory prevented the French from making any further attempt on a similar scale, and confirmed Britain's mastery of the seas. Nelson fell in battle, but the work which he had accomplished at Trafalgar and on earlier occasions vitally affected the issue of the war. His genius, for his circumspection and judgment in naval affairs were no less, saved Britain and enabled her to assert, in the darkest days, her unrivalled command of the seas in the Mediterranean, in the Channel and elsewhere.

Trafalgar was the one happy event in an inglorious year, for no sooner had the muffled beat of the drum brought Nelson back through London's streets than Pitt died at Putney, on January 23rd, 1806. His position in the history of his time is clear. He was a great peace minister whose penetration of thought and growing mastery over economic ideas were prevented from coming to fruition through the outbreak of war. His real career ended in 1793. Henceforth, he worked under the pressure of fear—fear of revolution and of the anarchy and war born in its bowels. He put aside all other interests, the plans which had sustained him in the past, the great ideals of the future, even Roman Catholic Emancipation (the King used his illness to extort this promise from Pitt), so that he should be completely free to carry the war to victory. He had great talents, but he had not the cast of mind, the necessary judgment in military affairs, or enough capable subordinates to command great military success. Yet no one else could have done better than he, there was no one whose speeches were so inspiring or no one who meant more to the country. He did not live to see victory, but

### *The Death of Pitt*

his careful handling of Britain's resources in the years of peace forged the weapons which eventually brought it about.

His ministry crumpled up as soon as he had died. The next few years witnessed what was on the whole a dismal series of experiments. Reluctantly, George III called Fox to office, and for the next year Britain was governed by a Coalition of 'All the Talents'—Whigs, Addingtonians, and Grenvillites. It set out with an extensive programme, it wanted to end the war and to lift some of the disabilities imposed on Roman Catholics. Neither of these objects was fulfilled, for Napoleon's ambitions overstepped even Fox's optimistic hopes. The ministry had decided that Pitt's policy of subsidising European allies was unremunerative, but its refusal to renew the subsidy to Russia was extremely impolitic. At last George III, angered by the ministry's rather underhand attempt to introduce Roman Catholic officers into the army and its continued support of Roman Catholic Emancipation, dismissed its leader, the aristocratic Grenville (Fox was already dead). Tory governments ruled the country during the remainder of the war: first, under the Duke of Portland, until September, 1809, then under the well-meaning Spencer Perceval, until Bellingham shot him in the lobby of the Commons in May, 1812, and finally under Liverpool. Liverpool's abilities were greater than historians have recognised. By no means outstanding, he was probably more politically experienced than any of his colleagues, and his long tenure of office until 1827 revealed capability, insight and a shrewd knowledge of finance and foreign policy. Furthermore, the appointment of Castlereagh as Foreign Secretary in 1812 gave the nation a man whose vision and cold precise judgment helped to steer both armies and diplomats to final success. But all this of course lay as yet in the future.

The war years between 1806 and 1812 formed another gloomy period, pierced momentarily by a gleam of Canning's genius at work. The Prussians were forced out of the war at Jena (1806), the Russians were defeated at Friedland (1807). The imaginative Czar Alexander decided to come to terms with Napoleon, for he

had lost confidence in the British alliance, suspecting rightly that Pitt's policy of subsidising Britain's allies was about to be discarded. The situation in the near East was also disquietening, 'the ill-considered forcing of the Dardanelles [by a British squadron under Admiral Duckworth],' writes Dr. Seton-Watson, 'followed by withdrawal, and then by a hopelessly bungled expedition to Egypt, doubtless weighed still further with the Czar to whom nothing that affected the Turkish Empire could be indifferent.' The Treaty of Tilsit between Alexander and Napoleon provided for the full recognition of all France's acquisitions, for the virtual reduction of Prussia to the status of a second-class power, and for a reaffirmation of the Berlin decrees (originally promulgated in 1806) blockading British trade, now to be publicised as the Continental System.

The fall of the Ministry of Talents in 1807 had led in foreign policy, at least, to a resurgence of effort under the new Foreign Secretary, George Canning. Learning through the British agent, Colin Mackenzie (who was hidden in the Czar's barge) of the so-called secret clauses of Tilsit, he determined to forestall the Russian and French plans by striking at the Danish fleet. Copenhagen was bombarded and the Danish fleet was transferred to British waters. Equally unpopular and much criticised by the opposition were the 'Orders in Council' Britain's reply to the Continental System, 'forbidding neutrals to trade between the ports of France and her allies, or between the ports of nations which should observe the Berlin decrees, on pain of the confiscation of the ship and cargo'.

Canning's new-found energy could not prevent the Emperor Napoleon's final act of aggression in the West. For some time his pride and, to a less extent, French commerce had been hurt by the continued friendly relations between Britain and Portugal. He certainly over-estimated Britain's economic dependence on Portugal's ports. Portugal on the Atlantic seaboard could only be attacked through Spain as Britain's navy held the seas. So be it. The decadent Bourbon royal family of Spain, with whom the French had been allied, was no match for the intriguing

### *France and Spain*

capacities of the French minister, Talleyrand. The Madrid scene had all the makings of comic opera if it had not been underlined by the tragedy of a long-oppressed people. King Charles IV was a weak-minded fool at loggerheads with his son, Ferdinand, most detestable of an unattractive family. The Queen was the mistress of the chief minister, the handsome Godoy, Duke of Alcudia. An agreement between France and Spain to partition Portugal in October, 1807, was followed by Junot's successful invasion of that country. Canning managed to rescue the Portuguese royal family, who were conveyed to Brazil, and, what was more valuable, the Portuguese fleet which sailed from the Tagus shortly before the French arrived. The final act came in the early months of 1808. Charles IV abdicated in favour of his son Ferdinand, no more popular than his father, appealed to Napoleon for protection, but the latter, contemptuous of the family quarrels, pensioned off both Charles and Ferdinand into comfortable exile, and bestowed the Spanish crown on his brother, Joseph.

The Peninsular War, to which these events were leading, was of crucial importance because, like a running sore, it weakened the Napoleonic armies. It was also a signal for the awakening of national consciousness throughout Europe. Canning saw to what good effect this new revolution could be put, adding, 'we shall proceed upon the principle that any nation of Europe which starts up with determination to oppose a power which is the common enemy of all nations, becomes instantly our essential ally.' But it cannot be said that British intervention in Spain in 1808 or 1809 was particularly successful. By the Convention of Cintra, Sir Hew Dalrymple allowed the French troops in Portugal to be re-embarked in British ships and disembarked at French ports. Despite this initial stupidity, justified by Wellesley on the ground that it secured the evacuation of Portugal, the 'Spanish ulcer' did eventually compel Napoleon to take on the supreme command in Spain himself. His intervention, unlike that of a more recent dictator, had a stabilising effect on France's military fortunes in the Peninsula for the time being. On December 4th, 1808, Joseph Bonaparte re-entered Madrid, while Sir John Moore, the



### *Britain at War, 1793-1815*

embodiment of gallant soldiery, retreated towards Corunna and death. Moore's death was followed by a period of inactivity.

The next three years saw Europe at its nadir. The flame of nationalism burnt fitfully rather than brilliantly. A temporary revival of Austrian power, marked by a victory over the French at Aspern in 1809, was followed by an ignominious collapse, and the marriage of an Imperial princess, Marie Louise, to Napoleon, while a British expedition to the island of Walcheren, intended as a diversionary raid to help the Austrians, was a complete fiasco. In Britain the Continental Blockade, stemming imports, of corn and, more important, exports of British manufactures, had worse effects than historians have sometimes admitted. If the dawn of liberation was actually drawing near, no one could disguise its 'red' and dangerous quality. Spain was the only significant theatre of war; here, Britain kept Wellington reinforced with men and supplies owing to her command of the seas. Throughout 1810 he organised his defensive tactics behind the historic lines of Torres Vedras, which he had constructed for the defence of Lisbon. After Fuentes d'Onoro in late Spring, 1811, he obliged the French general, Masséna, to retreat, and held the furious and well-measured attacks of Marshal Soult throughout the remainder of the year. In April, 1812, his capture of the key fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo enabled him to march into Spain. During the course of the year his persistence, first by means of raids, then turned into pitched battles gradually drew the British army further and further into Spain.

But everything faded into insignificance by the side of what was happening in Russia. Czar Alexander, irritated by the economic malaise caused by the British blockade, also disliked playing second fiddle to any man, let alone a makeshift Emperor who had unpardonably preferred to marry a Hapsburg rather than a Romanoff princess. The general military stalemate of 1810-1811, formed by Napoleon's inability to end the war in Spain, made the Czar think that he had temporarily lost the initiative, and that now was the time to make a stand. He was pressed to do this by the French leader's own diplomatic moves. If Russia,

### *The French Invasion of Russia*

Napoleon argued, could be brought finally within his control, his plans might be successfully achieved, the mirage of the route to the East which so attracted him might become a reality. Britain, totally isolated and deprived of a main source of wealth, would be compelled to come to terms. Thus, while the Czar made peace with the Turks, Napoleon entered into an alliance with Prussia and Austria and obliged the peoples of those unhappy states to send their sons to swell the ranks of the Grand Army.

The failure of the Russian expedition formed a prelude, lasting some two years, to final defeat. The once invincible army, defeated by the limitless distance and cruelty of the Russian climate as much as by military strategy, was in retreat. The three eastern rulers, of Russia, Prussia and Austria, began to prepare a new Coalition in collaboration with Britain. Prussia allied with Russia (February, 1813), Austria, under Metternich, as yet played an equivocal lead. It was now that Britain's new Foreign Secretary, Castlereagh, began to show his mastery. He hoped to weld Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria together into a firm alliance, an object which no British minister had yet achieved. This was a difficult task, as Britain's resources had been terribly strained by the long war and, since 1812, by a conflict with the United States. Prussia and Russia had so far been brought together by the zeal of ministers rather than the co-operation of monarchs, and no one could predict whether Frederick William III of Prussia would stay the course in the event of defeat. He declared war on March 17th, 1813, but by May, Blücher's forces were in retreat, leaving behind them the carnage of French victories at Lützen and Bautzen. Now, if ever, Napoleon, who had just occupied Dresden, should have pressed home his advantage, but he granted an armistice at Plaszewitz (June 4th, 1813), which gave the allies time to recover. The French armies, outnumbered in men and guns, were decisively defeated in the great Battle of the Nations at Leipzig, and before long were in retreat to their own frontier. Meanwhile, Metternich's hopes of mediating faded after a long nine hours' interview with the French Emperor, with the result that Austria once more joined the allies.

### *Britain at War, 1793-1815*

In Spain, Wellington's armies pressed forward over the rocky roads; the climax was reached in a decisive victory at Vitoria in June, 1813, which led to the evacuation of all Spain south of the river Ebro. The tide had at last turned in favour of the allies.

For the last year of the war, Castlereagh had to spend all his energies in keeping the allies together. The task was very difficult as there was little agreement and less constancy about the plans of the different combatants. The Treaty of Chaumont (March 1st, 1814) was his greatest achievement as he at last persuaded the four great powers to sign a Grand Alliance by which they agreed to persist in war until final success was won. These objects were defined as 'an enlarged and independent Holland, a confederated Germany, an independent Switzerland, a free Spain under a Bourbon dynasty, and the restitution of the Italian states.' He agreed that Britain should contribute twice as much money towards the allied effort as any other state. In an attempt to guide the future, the great powers decided to remain in alliance for twenty years after the war.

Less than a month after the publication of the Treaty, the allied soldiers entered Paris. Leaving a scrawled and ink-blotted note of abdication at the Palace of Fontainebleau, Napoleon left for the island of Elba. And the world, freed, except for the startling come-back of the Hundred Days, from the menace of war, awaited the outcome of the victors' wranglings over the future of Europe.

### *3. The Peace Settlement of 1814-1815*

What statesman dominated the Peace Congress? Was it Metternich or Castlereagh? Metternich's poise, butterfly gaiety, aristocratic judgment and hard work made him more than any other man the planner of the peace settlement, and yet it was Castlereagh's consummate skill that dissolved the discord among the allies and made peace a practicable achievement.

Castlereagh's moderation and Metternich's finesse brought the negotiations at Paris to a successful conclusion in May, 1814.

### *Castlereagh and Metternich*

It was agreed that the French frontier should be similar to that of 1792, and that French claims over the Low Countries, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Malta should be nullified. Britain received Mauritius, Tobago and Santa Lucia. Secret articles provided for the establishment of a Federation of German states and for further meetings of the great powers to maintain a 'system of real and permanent balance of power'. The terms were strikingly generous. It is true that men's minds were then less blurred by the hatred which modern war sows, and reacted more charitably towards the defeated power than the diplomats of 1947-1948 have done towards Germany. But there were good reasons for such generosity. They realised that a France, attenuated in her boundaries and exhausted economically by heavy indemnities, would continue to harbour hatred against her former opponents. They sought to restore the old royal family, the Bourbons, as the legitimate rulers of a country liberated from the dictatorial government of Napoleon. All these objects could only be achieved if the enemy nation was treated with insight and some sympathy.

The question of the settlement of Europe remained. This was the work of the diplomats, Castlereagh, Metternich, Hardenberg (Prussia), Nesselrode (Russia) and Talleyrand (France), who gathered at Vienna in September, 1814. The Congress has become famous for its festivities, its concerts and sleighing parties, its drawing-rooms and operas, but this should not hide the hard work done by the assembled ministers. There were a great many difficulties to be resolved. The futures of Poland and Saxony led to much bitter discussion and a real fear of war. This may have been avoided only by the skilful intervention of the French delegate, Talleyrand, who brought together France, Great Britain and Austria in an alliance for common defence in case any one of them should be attacked 'on account of the proposals to which they had mutually agreed for the completion of the Treaty of Paris.' This served its purpose by curbing Russian ambitions. Many other problems caused controversy and rivalry, and hindered the work of the diplomats.

Castlereagh played a prominent part in all the activities of the Congress. He described the principles guiding him in a letter to Liverpool 'In the first place, so to conduct the arrangement to be framed for the Congress, as to make the establishment of a just equilibrium in Europe the first object of my attention Secondly, to use my best endeavour to support the Powers who have contributed to save Europe by their exertions in their just pretensions. . . . And thirdly, to endeavour to combine this latter duty to our friends and Allies with as much mildness and indulgence, even to the offending States, as circumstances will permit.' It became his main object to maintain the balance of power and, in particular, to protect British interests by placing Antwerp and the Scheldt in friendly hands. As he thought that Russia and France were the two powers most likely to disturb European peace, he worked for the creation of a strong, independent Polish state, formed out of the provinces surrendered by Austria, Prussia and Russia. Prussia would receive compensation in Saxony and the Rhineland, and thus counterbalance a possible revival of French power. Austria would receive territorial compensation in Illyria and Italy. But it was soon clear that none of the three eastern states would surrender territory; the result was a compromise which preserved the Partition of Poland. Fear of French aggression also overshadowed his other main object, the creation of Holland and Belgium into an independent kingdom of the Netherlands with a general control over the river Scheldt. 'To leave it [i.e. Antwerp] in the hands of France,' he told Aberdeen, 'is little short of imposing upon Great Britain the charge of a perpetual war establishment.' After some complications, the former Austrian Netherlands were joined with Holland to form the kingdom of the Netherlands under the House of Orange.<sup>1</sup>

Before the statesmen had confirmed their decisions, news arrived of Napoleon's escape from Elba and arrival in France

<sup>1</sup> An attempt to arrange a dynastic marriage between the Prince of Orange and the Princess Charlotte, only daughter of the Prince Regent, which would have consolidated British influence in the Low Countries, failed. The Princess disliked her future husband (who got horribly drunk at Carlton House) and the engagement came to an end.

## *Waterloo*

He was greeted with great enthusiasm which pursued him all the way to Paris, from which Louis XVIII had departed *en route* for Ghent eighteen days earlier. From the Tuileries, Napoleon tried to sow division among his enemies and reduce their apprehensions by agreeing to rule over France as a constitutional monarch. But Europe was in no mood to trust Napoleon. On June 18th Blücher and Wellington defeated the French armies at Waterloo. Less than a month later (July 15th) Napoleon boarded H M S *Bellerophon* and threw himself on the mercies of the Prince Regent.

The defeat, which had its sequel in the six years of exile at St. Helena, caused a revision of the Treaty of Paris. While Prussia wanted impossibly heavy terms which would have crippled France for many years, Castlereagh emphasised that security was more important than reparations. If the second Treaty of Paris was, naturally, more severe than its predecessor, it was still not immoderate in its demands. France lost a little more territory and returned the works of art, which Napoleon had stolen, to their original owners; she was also forced to pay an indemnity of seven hundred million francs and to maintain an allied army of occupation for five years. The Treaty was reasonable and dignified, and it represented Castlereagh's very great powers as a negotiator.

Nine days before Waterloo (June 9th, 1815), the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna had been signed. Europe had been re-mapped. Holland and Belgium formed the new kingdom of the Netherlands. The Republic of Genoa (despite a British promise to respect its independence) was absorbed into Piedmont to make the northern Italian kingdom, with the Netherlands, buffers against French power. The treaty-makers took no account of national feeling. Thus Austria received Venetia in compensation for Belgium, while Norway<sup>1</sup> was taken away from Denmark,

<sup>1</sup> Crown-Prince Bernadotte of Sweden had been bribed by Czar Alexander in 1812 to intervene against France by the promise of Norway. The British confirmed this by the Treaty of Stockholm in 1813, and it was enforced in 1814. It was not therefore properly part of the Vienna settlement but it may well be considered under that heading.

### *Britain at War, 1793-1815*

whose King had remained loyal to Napoleon, and given to Sweden whose crown-prince, Bernadotte, was a *ci-devant* French marshal, in compensation for Finland, which became Russian. The Norwegians refused to recognise the justice of the change until the threat of Swedish invasion, coupled with a British naval blockade, brought about a surrender. The Vienna Treaty also provided for the future government of Germany by restoring thirty-eight of the old states, including Hanover, and binding them together under the presidency of Austria.

The peace-making has been much criticised, but the settlement was certainly more durable than the Treaty of Versailles of 1919. Most of the objections must, however, be accepted. No real attempt was made to understand the needs of peoples or nations. The settlement was implicitly conservative and aristocratic, it represented a philosophy of life and politics that was bound to change as the Industrial Revolution transformed European economy, and as the national and liberal sentiments, spread by the armies of Napoleon, inspired and inflamed the peoples. But this is not a criticism of the Treaty. It is a criticism of the men who made it. They, and the monarchs whom they represented, mirrored a particular social and political structure founded on birth and property. It was inevitable that they should act as they did. If these objections be admitted, it must also be recognised that the Treaty of Vienna was in some ways remarkably successful. There were many minor changes, but there was no major world war until 1914. Nineteenth-century Europe slowly evolved under the impact and in the shadow of, in response to and by reaction from, the Treaty of Vienna.

## CHAPTER XV

# IRELAND AND SCOTLAND IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

### 1. *Ireland*

The long and tedious sea journey, usually preceded by a trek from London to Holyhead or Parkgate (near Chester), pointed to the social, religious, political and economic differences that separated England from Ireland. In part the effects of the turmoil and misrule of the past century, they conditioned all that occurred during the ensuing period. Irish society consisted of three main classes: the official representatives of the English government, headed by the Lord-Lieutenant, who regarded Ireland as a place of dreary exile, the Anglo-Irish, who formed an English colony originally designed to eliminate the old native aristocracy; and the native Catholic Irish, consisting of a small and impoverished group of gentry and a very large class of Irish peasants and labourers. The latter were, as Swift put it, 'mere hewers of wood and drawers of water,' or in the alternative words of another writer seventy years later, 'mice in an air pump, who were suffered to exist and barely to breathe for the sake of experiment'. The Catholics suffered from a series of penal laws, executed to a lesser or greater degree, which debarred them from holding most public offices, greatly diminished their rights as landholders, and which were in general aimed ideally to eliminate Roman Catholicism, or at any rate to make it completely subject to the Protestant minority.

The native Irish were commercially and politically subject to England. 'Tied to the soil, with little incentive to work and no opportunity to accumulate capital, with starvation staring him daily in the face, he [i.e. the Irish peasant] grew up to a wild, reckless existence. Marrying early, he filled his cabin with



## *Ireland and Scotland*

half-fed, naked children. If he could pay his landlord his rent, the parson his tithes, and the parish priest his dues, and withal manage to scrape together a scanty livelihood for himself, he was tolerably happy.' 'This island,' wrote an Irish member of Parliament, 'is supposed to contain three millions, of these, two millions live like beasts of the field upon a root picked out of the earth,' or, to be more exact, on herrings and potatoes. What wealth came from the land went to swell the purse of the absentee landlord; in 1769, this figure was placed as high as £1,208,982 a year. Despite what may be called a relatively prosperous period (until the 1770's) in Ireland's economic history, the Irishman suffered from the restrictions imposed on his economic life by the English government. The English graziers and landlords, fearing Irish competition, had persuaded Parliament to forbid the import into England of Irish beef, pork, mutton, butter and cheese. Similarly, an act of 1699 had banned the export of woollen manufactures, thus dealing a crippling blow at the Irish cloth trade. No wonder that many Irish continued to emigrate either to the colonies or the Continent. Nature and legislation combined to increase the wretchedness and poverty of the Irish peasantry.

Politically, the country was equally subordinate to England. The Irish Parliament, which met at Dublin, was unrepresentative and corrupt as well as powerless. The majority of the boroughs were in the hands of immensely rich patrons, like the Marquis of Downshire, who distributed them in accordance with their own vested interests. General elections were so infrequent that the House elected in 1727 sat until 1760. 'The greatest evil in politics,' wrote the nineteenth-century Irish historian, W. E. H. Lecky, 'is power without control, and this evil never acquired more fearful dimensions than in Ireland in the early years of the eighteenth century.' Poynings' Law had laid down in the reign of Henry VII that no law passed by the Irish Parliament would be valid until it had received the consent of the King and Council. A later law of 1719 deprived the Irish House of Lords of its power of acting as a High Court of Appeal and confirmed the power of



FIG 7 Ireland in the Eighteenth Century.

## *Ireland and Scotland*

the English Parliament to make any law that it liked for Ireland. 'If we do flourish,' wrote Swift, 'it must be against every law of Nature and Reason, like the Thorn at Glastonbury, that blossoms in the midst of winter'

Whether this historical development could be arrested or changed depended on three things: the sympathetic attitude of the English Parliament, the willingness of the Anglo-Irish to sacrifice themselves in the interests of all Ireland and the possibility of a reconciliation between the Irish Protestants and the Roman Catholics. The first possibility could be dismissed at once; 'each part of England is dearer to *her* than the whole of Ireland'. On the other hand, it was at least possible that the Anglo-Irish, who resented the commercial restrictions, might have been willing to sink their religious differences, for even Irish Catholicism suffered from the prevailing religious apathy, in economic unity. But the innate selfishness of the ruling clique and the irresponsibility of the rather wild Anglo-Irish squirearchy made this impossible. Thus, the history of Ireland in the eighteenth century alternated between deceptive calm and sheer anarchy; the smell of burning peat in the primitive cabins intermingled with the clash of arms; the brilliant society that attended the first performance of Handel's *Messiah* at Dublin in 1741 or went to the plays at the famous theatre in Smock Alley, combined with the measured chant of the Mass to form a multi-coloured picture of misgovernment and rapine, lightened occasionally by honesty, patriotism and foresight.

The period opened with a struggle between the Anglo-Irish and the English government over economic and financial issues which might have given hope of better things. As Ireland suffered from a famine of coinage, caused by the commercial stagnation and the way in which coins in the form of rents passed to Irish landlords living in England, Walpole granted a patent to mint £100,800 of copper coins to George I's mistress, the Duchess of Kendal, who sold the patent to an ironmaster called Wood for £10,000. Apart from the economic inadvisability of the measure, it provoked a tremendous outcry from the Irish and

### *Ireland and the War of American Independence*

Anglo-Irish alike, which is reflected in Dean Swift's astringent *Drapier's Letters*. The government realised its mistake and, on Carteret's advice, revoked the contract. It also saw the danger of alienating the Anglo-Irish and so brought about what was a virtual reconciliation of conflicting interests. Walpole appointed Hugh Boulter to the archbishopric of Armagh and the primacy. Although Boulter was totally unsympathetic towards the Irish Catholics, he saw that what Ireland wanted was good government and sound economy and this, within limits, was what he set out to give her. He discouraged emigration, extended tillage, did something to relieve the poor and stimulated the native industries. The Anglo-Irish 'undertakers' or borough proprietors agreed to support Boulter as long as they were allowed to monopolise the most lucrative posts in the Church and the State. Although it was disturbed momentarily in 1751 by Archbishop Stone's attempt to ignore the Irish borough proprietors by forming a party of his own, the alliance between the Primate and the 'undertakers' formed the basis of government for the first half of the period and gave Ireland something approaching peace and prosperity, even if it did not cure the malaise from which she was suffering.

The War of American Independence brought this period of quiet to an end. A brisk and profitable trade in beef and butter, in hides and tallow, to England and the Continent as well as to the West Indies and the American colonies, had done something to offset the blow struck at the Irish cattle and woollen industry. The war cut off the linen trade between Ireland and France, while Lord North placed an embargo on the export of provisions. Furthermore, the Irish, many of whom had emigrated to the American colonies, regarded the rebels' case sympathetically. The issues which had caused the war seemed curiously similar to those which divided England from Ireland. 'We are all Americans here,' said Lord Midleton, a young Irish peer, 'except such as are attached securely to the Castle or papists', the engaging and enlightened Lord Charlemont spoke of the colonists as 'termed rebels for their heroic struggles in vindication of their natural rights.' To economic and political discontent must be

## *Ireland and Scotland*

added the revival of religious discord. Many Irish peasants, distressed by having to pay tithes to an alien Church, joined the secret society called the Whiteboys who attacked unpopular landlords. 'One of their usual punishments,' wrote Arthur Young, 'was taking people out of their beds, carrying them naked in winter, on horseback, for some distance, and burying them up to their chins in a hole filled with briars, not forgetting to cut off one of their ears.' Catholic action led to the rise of a rival group called the Steelboys, mainly composed of Ulster Presbyterians. Thus the government was already grappling with incipient anarchy before economic distress reached its climax.

This formed the background to the movement for an independent Irish Parliament, led by Henry Grattan and Henry Flood. The entry of France and Spain into the American War had revived the fear of invasion of Ireland, and resulted in the formation of a strong Volunteer force, officered by Irish Protestant gentry. This altered the balance of power in Ireland. 'The government found in place of tranquil, if slightly discontented, subjects, a loyal but armed and disciplined people, and the English administration were startled to learn that Ireland, long a submissive partaker of imperial burdens, had become a military nation, clamorously demanding a redress of her grievances.'<sup>1</sup> 'Talk not to me of peace,' said Hussey Burgh; 'it is not peace, but smothered war. England has sown her laws in dragons' teeth, and they have sprung up armed men.' Confronted again by the possible loss of Anglo-Irish support, the English Parliament first repealed some of the economic restrictions and then, after the great Convention of 80,000 Volunteers at Dungannon had demanded a free Parliament, at Rockingham's behest, agreed to free the Irish Parliament from English control and give it legislative independence. 'I understand,' was Grattan's remark, 'that Great Britain gives up *in toto* every claim to authority over Ireland.'

Yet the next two decades saw an increase rather than a decrease in dissatisfaction and discontent. This was in part a result of

<sup>1</sup> R B McDowell, *Irish Public Opinion, 1750-1800*, 51.

### *Grattan's Parliament*

the inadequacy of the Irish Parliament, which was no more representative of Ireland and no less corrupt than it had been earlier; it was an oligarchy in the hands of the Anglo-Irish, led by the powerful Chancellor, Fitzgibbon, later Earl of Clare. Neither Roman Catholics nor Ulster Presbyterians who between them made up the majority of the country had the right to vote or to become members of Parliament. Furthermore, although the English Parliament no longer directly controlled, English influence continued to predominate by a careful distribution of bribes and peerages. As Wellesley wrote in 1792, the real defect of the settlement of 1782 was the grant of parliamentary self-government without ministerial responsibility. Moreover, Pitt's proposals for a commercial treaty in 1785 came to nothing in the face of an angry outcry from the manufacturers of Lancashire and some opposition in Ireland, thus, in one view postponing 'colonial self-government for a generation'. Religious squabbles had also raised their head again and had led to the renewal of atrocities and the formation of a new terrorist society called the Defenders. The appointment of Earl Fitzwilliam, who was known to favour Roman Catholic Emancipation, was a sequel to Pitt's bid to gain Roman Catholic support against other discontented elements by giving them the vote but, owing to the tactlessness of the Lord-Lieutenant and the opposition of the Anglo-Irish group, the scheme failed and Fitzwilliam was recalled.

Meanwhile, the outbreak of the French Revolution had evoked a response in many Irish hearts, and in Wolfe Tone's in particular, he founded the United Irishmen in 1791 to 'subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connection with England, the never-failing source of our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country'. Political, economic and religious turmoil was rapidly coming to a head. One versifier wrote:

Are ye fathers and can see  
Poor infants born in slavery,  
Nor make one effort brave,  
Inglorious in thy bondage moan  
Beneath thy burden silent groan,  
And live and die as slaves

## *Ireland and Scotland*

But it was very clear that the only chance of success lay in a rising occurring simultaneously with a French invasion. In December, 1796, the Directory's Fleet under Hoche left Brest, evaded the British but was dispersed by fog and storm in Bantry Bay. Next autumn another expedition was prevented from sailing by Duncan's victory at Camperdown. Then, without waiting for the arrival of the French (who landed at Killala under Humbert two months later and were easily defeated), the Irish rose in May, 1798, the short campaign which virtually ended at Vinegar Hill was characterised by bitter intolerance and hatred. 'Ireland,' Dean Kirwan told a fashionable congregation at St Thomas's Church, Dublin, 'will be distinguished in the records of time as an illustrious and adamant rock against which the overwhelming surges of French anarchy have dashed in vain,' 'Let us,' he concluded, 'all raise our eyes with ardent and eternal thanksgiving for the preservation of religion, liberty, property and life.'

The rebellion forced the government to take action, and led to the Act of Union of 1800. 'Ireland in its present state,' said Lord Carlisle, 'will pull down England. She is a ship on fire, and must either be cast off or extinguished.' Pitt had come to the same conclusion, as early as 1792 he had written to the Lord-Lieutenant. 'The idea of the present fermentation gradually bringing both parties to think of an Union with this country, has long been in my mind . . . it [is] the only solution for other and greater difficulties.' The Act of Union brought the Irish Parliament to an end (a great deal of bribery had to be used among the Irish M.P.s to attain this result) and gave the Irish 100 seats in the Commons and thirty-two in the Lords. Financial adjustments were made to regulate the monetary arrangements between the two countries. Much was hoped for from the measure. It would, it was said, allay the discontent by fusing the two peoples together and so contribute to 'anglicanising' the Irish, and it would bring untold economic advantages to a poor country like Ireland. 'the union of a child,' said Dean Tucker, 'or rather a pigmy with a giant in strength, commerce and freedom for mutual support'

### *The Act of Union, 1801*

In fact the Act never wholly satisfied the Irish. The introduction of free trade in the nineteenth century imposed a frightful strain on Irish agriculture, already suffering from the effects of bad landlordship, and removed the small measure of protection accorded to Irish industries in the eighteenth century. It only made the Irish resent their apparent political subordination to England more than they had done earlier. More immediately, it brought the brilliant, cultured Dublin society to a close, for the Irish gentry deserted Ireland to a greater degree than ever before, taking their revenues with them, while, after Pitt's failure to gain George III's support for Roman Catholic Emancipation, this too remained (until 1829) a constant sore. If there were an increasing number of enlightened Englishmen who felt that Britain's treatment of her sister isle was uncomprehending and oppressive, it was yet also true that they were singularly few in number.

### *2 Scotland*

While the two events which every Englishman remembers about Scotland in the eighteenth century are the rebellions of 1715 and 1745, these events must not be allowed to deflect the student from the less dramatic history of Scotland's political, economic and social development. For the Jacobite rebellions, representing the traditional loyalty of the Highland clans and the discontent which was never lacking in a poor country like Scotland, were never more than a temporarily serious threat to the Hanoverians. The Jacobites remained a political and military factor of some importance until Pitt had the idea of raising a Scottish regiment to fight in the Seven Years' War against France. Thereafter Jacobitism was little more than sentiment.

England and Scotland had been joined together by the Act of Union of 1707, the inevitable if tardy sequel to the accession of James I to the English throne in 1603. The poorer neighbour was bound to bargain its political independence for economic



## *Ireland and Scotland*

advantage Scotland surrendered her independent Parliament and submitted to rule by the English Cabinet and Parliament in which she had nominal rather than real representation. The forty-five members were elected by so restricted a franchise, both in the counties and burghs, that it would be simply absurd to pretend that Scotland was effectually represented in the Commons, there were 2,655 voters in the Scottish counties in 1790. In practice the Scottish group toed the line in accordance with the wish of the great peers, the Duke of Argyll or his brother, Lord Islay or Henry Dundas at a later date, completely oblivious of the Scottish interests which they were supposed to represent. Later there were members like George Dempster and Sir Gilbert Elliott who urged the necessity for parliamentary and municipal reform, but they carried very little weight. In return for this Scotland enjoyed the same trading privileges as England and was allowed to take part in all English trading enterprises on the same terms as the merchants of the other country. These were advantages of real moment which greatly increased the amount and value of Scotland's trade. Nor did the Union terminate Scotland's existence as a national entity. That the country was still left with an independent Church system and a separate legal system helped to sustain the nationalism of her people and give them a sense of homogeneity.

There were occasions when the country's destinies were presided over by a specially appointed Secretary of State, but there were long intervals when there was no Secretary. The Duke of Montrose lost his post when the '15 rebellion broke out. The office was revived for the Duke of Roxburgh in 1716 but he was dismissed after a quarrel with Walpole in 1725. Thereafter there was no successor, except for Tweeddale, appointed by Carteret in 1742 and dismissed in 1746, until 1885.

No wonder, then, that political radicalism found a ready response from the disfranchised Scotsman who made up the majority of his country's population. There was a long tradition of disorder. In 1736 a smuggler who had robbed a customs officer was sentenced to death. The Edinburgh mob got so out of

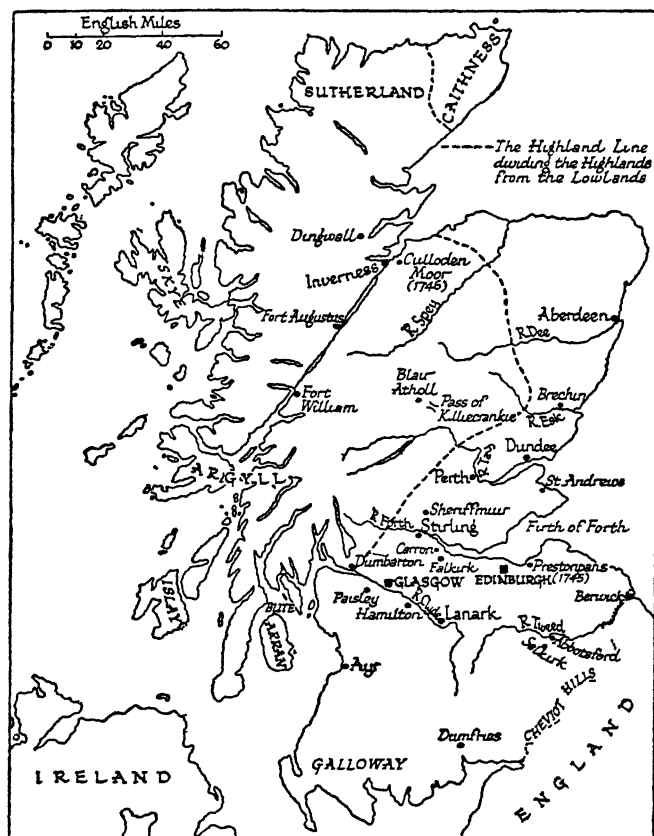


FIG. 8 Scotland in the Eighteenth Century.

## *Ireland and Scotland*

hand that Captain Porteus of the Town Guard ordered his men to disperse the crowd by firearms. He was duly tried for murder and sentenced to death, was reprieved by the Queen and lynched by the mob, an incident described in Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*. Later in the century, the ideas of the French Revolution received a sympathetic hearing from Scotsmen of all classes, whether noble lords who resented English domination or disaffected weavers and unemployed herring fishermen. The government acted ruthlessly, using the unpleasant Lord Braxfield as their chief judicial agent in the suppression of supposed treachery. A strong Radical tradition has nevertheless persisted to the present day.

These characteristic features of Scottish political life may explain something of the salient traits of Scottish history in the period. Politically apathetic as the Scots were, except in times of crisis like the War of American Independence or the French Revolution, they made up for it by the interest which they showed in ecclesiastical controversy, by the vitality of Scottish culture and the tremendous energy that they threw into industrial projects. And this is where the true significance of Scotland's history in this period is to be found, not at Westminster nor at Holyrood, but among the workers of Glasgow and the coffee and claret drinking society of Edinburgh.

There was a cleavage between the Lowlands and the Highlands throughout the period. The Lowlands, which contained Edinburgh, a city of some 36,000 people in 1714, was in government, economics and culture the most progressive part of the country. Here agricultural improvements introduced from England by progressive landlords like John Cockburn, laird of Ormiston in East Lothian, tended to reduce the natural infertility of the soil, while enclosure and the subsequent formation of more compact farms steadily did away with the disadvantages of the prevailing 'run-rig' system of arable farming (this corresponded roughly to the English strip system). There was also a steady improvement in the quality of the goods, mainly linen and woollens, produced by the young Scottish industries.

### *The Opening Up of the Highlands*

Glasgow became more and more the centre of Scotland's commercial life. By 1776 more colonial goods were passing through the port than through Bristol or Liverpool, imports of tobacco, which with rum and sugar constituted the most important products, rose from 4,000,000 lbs in 1724 to 47,000,000 lbs in 1771. The Highlands presented a totally different picture, their scenic grandeur dominating a semi-feudal society, still split by clan rivalries, permeated by permanent disorder and abject poverty. Many of the Highland clansmen, like Rob Roy of Clan Macgregor, made a living by raiding the cattle of the Lowlanders.

The suppression of the '45 led to the opening up of the Highlands. This had already been anticipated to some extent by the roadbuilding work of General Wade.

If you had seen these roads before they were made,  
You would have held up your hands and blessed General Wade

He foresaw that the most realistic way of disarming the Highland clans was to build roads which, from the purely strategic point of view, would bring the clans under English control. His work was incomplete when the '45 rebellion broke out. The measures taken after the rebellion had ended quickened the process, for while some were purely punitive, such as the forfeiture of rebel estates and the ban placed on wearing the kilt and tartan, others were constructive and even conciliatory. An obstacle to order in the past had been the chiefs' 'heritable jurisdiction' which gave them the right to exercise judicial authority outside the courts of law and to insist on military service from their tenants. Its abolition, however unpopular, was an essential preliminary to pacification. The remaining actions of the government, for which the responsibility rested with the wise Lord Advocate, William Grant, were excellent in intention and effect. The revenue from the confiscated estates was used to foster local industry and to improve agriculture. Turbulence continued and the process of change was lengthy, but as more and more schools and roads were built, it became effective.

In the latter half of the century the Lowlands felt the impact

### *Ireland and Scotland*

of industrial revolution The War of American Independence had brought a trade depression to Glasgow but it soon recovered and became the centre of a vital industrial and commercial life. There were cotton mills in the villages of Lanark, Renfrew and Ayr William Kelly applied water power to turn Crompton's Mule at Lanark in 1790, and two years later Watt's steam engine was first used in Glasgow. Industrial life was also developing in the east of Scotland, more particularly in the vicinity of the famous Carron ironworks founded by a Birmingham doctor named Roebuck in 1760 Linked by canal to Glasgow and the Clyde, the Carron foundry became 'the greatest ironworks in Europe, conducted by the greatest company ever associated for carrying on a manufacture,' and employing over a thousand workers Various branches of the textile industry, wool, linen and cotton, scattered over different parts of the Lowlands, contributed further to the country's industrial development Finally the heavy tax on malt, used in the brewing of ale, led to an increase in whisky drinking and a corresponding growth in the number of distilleries

This economic change was to some extent paralleled by what had been happening in the country's culture Despite a number of secessions and quarrels over patronage, ecclesiastical 'moderation' penetrated further and further into Church life, horrifying some and gladdening others It certainly tended to deplore intolerance and welcome a humane culture. And this was one of the most brilliant periods in the realm of learning The old city of Edinburgh, enriched in the period by buildings designed by the greatest architect of the time, the Scottish Robert Adam, housed a society, fashionable as well as cultivated, which was always eager to discuss the latest theory or to engage in witty conversation. The excellence of Scottish education may account for this singular development Scotland was well supplied with efficient Universities, the primary schools increased in number in the Lowlands as well as in the Highlands. The Scottish branch of the S P C K also established a large number of schools in the Highlands As a natural result there was no

### *The Development of Scotland*

branch of learning or art in which Scotsmen did not excel. Moral philosophy and economics were represented by Adam Smith and Dugald Stewart, history by Hume and Robertson, biography by James Boswell, surgery by Hunter, medicine by Cullen, engineering by Watt, poetry by Allan Ramsay, Macpherson and Burns, fiction by Smollett and Sir Walter Scott, and painting by Raeburn. It was Voltaire who said truly 'It is an admirable result of the progress of the human spirit that at the present time it is from Scotland we receive rules of taste in all the arts—from the epic poem to gardening'

And this was the essential symbol of the unique success of the Act of Union of 1707 which had welded the two countries together in common interests, despite Jacobitism. Since George I ascended the throne, there had been steady progress in every direction. Already Scots were taking their place in every profession, as Cabinet ministers, as judges and as soldiers. Their accustomed toughness and commercial acumen won them a prominent position in the mercantile world. Both the East India Company and the Hudson's Bay Company recruited the majority of their clerks and agents from Scotland. Eager to find wealth outside their own poor borders, courageous adventurers, ambitious of hardship as well as of high position, the Scots—both Sir James Bruce and Mungo Park, African explorers, were Scots—penetrated to every part of the known world. Scotland was in fact approaching a higher standard of livelihood than she had ever enjoyed.

Thus Scotland and Ireland form a contrast, the one tortured by misunderstanding and languishing in an atmosphere of suspicion and hostility, the other marching towards a future which, if uncertain, was at least full of promise.

## CHAPTER XVI

### GEORGIAN ENGLAND, 1760-1815

#### 1. *Agriculture*

The process of industrial change quickened after George III became King, but the encroachment of industry had not marred England's rural tranquillity. It was indeed an interesting and important period in English farming. Progressive farming formed its leading characteristic. Building on the pioneer work of Townshend, Tull and Bakewell, the great estate owner developed his lands along modern scientific lines. New crops were introduced, new instruments were used, breeding was improved as profits grew. This was excellently exemplified in the work of Thomas Coke of Holkham. Taking over his estates at the age of twenty-four in 1776, he infused all who worked them with his unconquerable vigour and enthusiasm until his death sixty-six years later. Norfolk soil, reputedly regarded as infertile, was transformed by marl and manure. Both his own estates and those of his tenants and neighbours were improved by his example, and it is said that the rent roll which he inherited at £2,200 a year was worth over £20,000 forty years later.

The government showed its awareness of this trend in agriculture by establishing a Board of Agriculture in 1793, and by appointing an extremely competent agrarian observer, the Scottish laird, Sir John Sinclair, to preside over it. He was assisted by Arthur Young, an indifferent farmer but an indefatigable analyst. He made exhaustive and detailed tours of most of the English counties as well as of Ireland and France. In 1784 he began the *Annals of Agriculture*, and on the foundation of the Board of Agriculture he became its first Secretary. Young

### *Enclosure*

and Sinclair represent an entirely new type, the expert on farming who does not farm himself, but whose wide knowledge and enthusiasm, belief in scientific methods and powers of accurate observation, were in the course of time to dominate agriculture

The process of enclosure which had begun earlier in the century continued at an ever increasing rate after 1760, and formed a leading characteristic of agrarian progress. Its economic effects were excellent, as it made farming more efficient and so increased the profits of the big farmers who were most interested and most willing to invest their money in improvements. But it tended to emphasise the difference in status and efficiency between the big farmer and the small farmer and working cottager. The landlord or the tenant who held his land on a secure lease had to pay the high legal costs involved in the process of enclosure, but they were immune from its more unpleasing economic effects. The cottager or yeoman farmer, on the other hand, often had his supplementary income practically destroyed through the enclosure of the common land. Young, who approved of enclosure, admitted that 'by nineteen enclosure bills in twenty [the poor] are injured, in some grossly injured'. However beneficial the economic results of enclosure, it had lamentable social effects as it tended to emphasise the movement towards the absorption of smaller properties in big farms and the creation of a landless proletariat. It was no accident that by 1873 over half England was owned by 2,250 persons while the number of labourers had greatly increased. Yet it is necessary to be extremely cautious in judging the effects of enclosure. Despite selling caused by the high prices obtained in war-time, there was a general increase in the amount of land held by small owners during the war years, 1793-1815.

In general farming prospered until the war ended. The price of corn, which had been low, if fairly stable, in the earlier years of the eighteenth century, rose steadily after 1760 (England ceased to export and began to import corn in 1765, an indication of her increasing population), and reached its climax during



## *Georgian England, 1760-1815*

the Napoleonic wars The war gave a natural impetus to food production as the country was no longer self-sufficient While, then, Napoleon's blockade came within a margin of success, British farmers went all out to grow more corn and to enclose what land remained. The price of corn rose to new high levels, reaching a maximum in 1813 when the price at Mark Lane was 155s. a quarter. 'A Scotch estate, bought for £18,500 in 1779, and improved by the expenditure of £2,000, sold for £57,000 in 1798' The farming community reaped its profits. William Cobbett, scornful of the new type of farmer, described him with a 'fox-hunting horse, polished boots, a spanking trot to market, a "get out of the way or by God I'll ride over you" to every poor devil on the road, wine at his dinner, a servant (sometimes in livery) to wait at his table, a painted lady for a wife, sons aping the young squires and lords, and a house crammed with sofas, pianos and all sorts of fooleries.' But not all this new-found wealth was squandered Some went into improvements, Meikle's threshing machine or Salmon's hay-tedder (for tossing hay), which were so disliked by the ordinary farm labourer. It was perhaps as well that the farmer should enjoy his revenues while the sun shone, for he was approaching a bleak period of post-war depression

Thus the overwhelmingly rural character of the country had not changed by 1815. There were changes; there was less forest than there had been at the beginning of the century, for there had been many wars, and a single ship of the line needed 4,000 full-grown trees for its construction Enclosure had led to systematisation; parks and woods alternated with efficient hedged fields But the country, not Kent alone, was still, and for some time remained, the well-named 'garden of England.'

## *2 Industrial revolutions*

Industrial change depended on an improvement in communications. The pack-horse plodding along the rutted road was suited

### *Roads and Canals*

to an age of domestic industry rather than to the modern factory system. Roads were gradually improved, but however much improved they were, they could not hope to deal with the supply of raw materials and the distribution of the finished goods associated with a modern factory system. More and more roads had been taken over by the turnpike trusts, but their efficiency varied greatly. In any case only some 21,000 out of 125,000 miles of roadway in England in 1820 were under the control of the trusts. The remainder was left to the irregular supervision of the local authorities. Foreign observers, however, commented on the excellent surface of the roads along which they travelled. This must have been the results of improvements in surfacing, made first by Metcalf, and then by Telford and the Scotch engineer, Jack Loudon Macadam. The speed of transport became quicker, especially after John Palmer decided to couple the mail with passenger traffic and make the latter pay for the former. If this accelerated the rate of business, it did not materially assist in the conveyance of goods.

Waterways were the most important means of transport. Many rivers which are to-day closed to shipping were then navigable to small craft, and it was long before rivers gave way to the canals which revolutionised inland transport. Brindley made the first important canal from Worsley to Manchester under the guidance of the Duke of Bridgewater. In the next thirty years the country was webbed by canals, 1793 marked the beginning of a regular boom in canal building. By the early nineteenth century £11,000,000 had been invested in the four thousand miles of waterways which linked together the different parts of England and Wales in one vast system. The construction of canals at once enabled goods to be carried from district to district in greatly increased quantity at much reduced charges. Naturally this had repercussions on both manufacturer and consumer. The latter benefited from the diminished charges and so bought an increasing quantity of goods. The former was able to produce his goods more cheaply and to sell them in greater quantity than ever before. He was no longer dependent

on sea-borne coal as coal from the inland mines could now be brought within range of his factories. Two other points might be noticed. The canals were slow and very irregular in draught and width. This greatly inconvenienced the system of transport but very little attempt at improvement had been made because of lack of competition. Thus, important as canals were, they did not represent the last word in the development of England's communications. The creation of the railway, already foreshadowed in Curr's flanged rails and Trevithick's steam engine, was the final step in the promotion of industrial change.

Like other great changes in human history, the industrial revolutions occurred as a result of a number of causes. The natural economic stimulus was the vast increase in demand, caused by the needs of a growing population on the one hand, and the increase in available wealth, partly from land, partly from overseas trade, for investment and purchase on the other. Yet it is doubtful whether industrial change can be explained in economic terms alone. The scientific spirit accounted more and more for inventions of one kind and another, even if it is recognised that these inventions very often arose out of the economic need to restore the balance in some industrial process. In 1764, a new periodical, the *Wonderful Magazine*, was founded to record things 'out of the common road,' and the *Gentleman's Magazine* announced fifteen years later that it was part of its policy to proclaim 'the discovery of every new invention and the improvements in every useful art.' It must be re-emphasised, however, that the industrial revolutions were the result of an economic rather than a social impulse. Inventive fertility was not merely a reflection of prevalent scientific curiosity. In the first instance it resulted from an attempt to restore the balance to various processes in the manufacture of textiles.

But the revolution in technique was bound to precede industrial change. By speeding up the weaving process, Kay's Flying Shuttle had upset the rhythm of production and had made some change in the spinning of yarn necessary if the spinner was to keep pace with the weaver. James Hargreaves, a weaver from

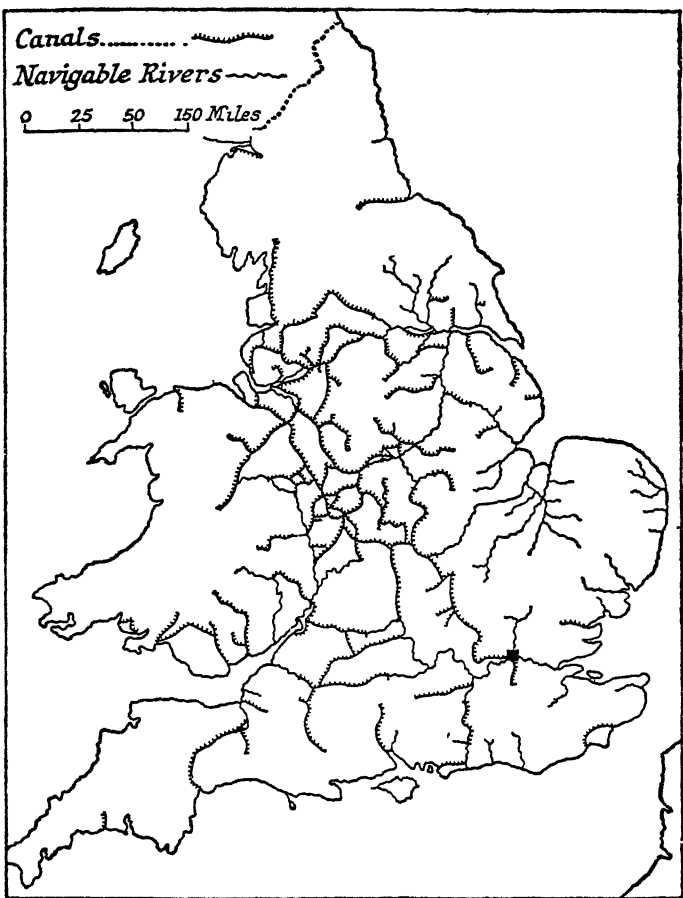


FIG. 9. The Canals and Waterways in Eighteenth-century England

Standhill, near Blackburn, discovered that the principle of the spinning wheel could be applied to more than one machine, the Spinning Jenny was really a multiple spinning wheel. Simple in principle and cheap in manufacture, it could be used equally well in cottage and factory, and was less revolutionary than Arkwright's Water-frame, which was patented in 1769. Paul and Wyatt had experimented earlier with the idea of spinning by using rollers before Arkwright, whether honestly or not seems difficult to judge, made use of the Water-frame at his Cromford Mill. Ten years or so later, Crompton, a Lancashire spinner, the son of a yeoman farmer who lived at the attractively named 'The Hall in the Wood,' combined the features of the Jenny and the Water-frame in the well-named 'Mule.' The 'Mule' was rapidly improved upon and soon resulted in the eclipse of the Jenny in the cotton industry; by 1812 it was responsible for employing 70,000 spinners and 150,000 weavers. The effect of these three discoveries was to place the weaver in much the same position as the spinner had been a generation earlier; the technical achievement in spinning had upset the balance in weaving. One further invention changed the textile industry and more or less restored the balance, the Power-loom invented by Edmund Cartwright, an Oxford don and cleric who was a professor of poetry. Incidental improvements followed. Scheele's discovery of chlorine in 1774 and Berthollet's realisation that it could be used to bleach coloured fibres, in 1785, resulted in the experimental introduction of chemical bleaching. An improved art of printing cotton goods helped to give them a better finish and to make them more attractive to the ordinary purchaser. The application of these discoveries to the innately conservative woollen industry was neither so rapid nor so uniform, but a change had occurred by 1815.

The transformation of the metal industries was complementary to that of the textiles. Darby's process for producing pig-iron in quantity had upset the balance of the iron industry, for his work needed to be completed by using coal in the refining of pig-iron as well as in the treatment of ore. The cast-iron was

## *Iron and Coal*

in fact too brittle to take heavy weights or strains. A method had to be discovered for removing the impurities from the cast-iron. In 1784 Henry Cort, a naval agent with a forge at Fontley near Fareham—Peter Onions reached the same conclusion at Merthyr Tydfil—solved the problem by using the puddling process. A long puddling rod stirred the molten metal, thus burning out the carbon impurities and making an iron that was both tougher and cleaner.<sup>1</sup> The invention enabled British ironmasters to underprice their European competitors and yet produce better quality iron, the production of bar iron, for instance, at the Crawshay works at Cyfartha rose from ten to two hundred tons within a week. Coal production increased three-fold between 1700 and 1800. Three central problems faced the eighteenth-century collier, and were in part solved by him: improvement in mining methods, the increase in coal output and the transport of coal from the mine's face to the pit shaft. The dangers of coal-mining were greater then than now; mines might be flooded or miners suffocated by 'choke-damp' or burned by explosions through fire-damp. A limited amount of attention was given to all these problems. The steam engine was first used in pumping water from the mines, while Sir Humphry Davy's safety lamp was introduced to separate the illuminating flame from the fire-damp (methane) that caused explosions. The increase of output naturally led to bigger and deeper pits and the building of long galleries beneath the coal face propped up by bricks and lumber. The miner's equipment was slightly improved by the invention of a mechanical pick, known as 'Willie Brown's iron man,' in 1761. The third problem remained until the birth of the railway.

Power was the vital link in the chain of industrial development, even if power depended on metallurgical progress. Watt could not have perfected the steam engine if Wilkinson had not provided

<sup>1</sup> Dr Clapham pointed out in his *Economic History* (1, 149) that 'Cort's process . . . was no great success until the Homfrays of Penydaren improved it by adopting, among other things, a coke refining furnace which preceded the puddling furnace proper, in which originally raw coal was used.'

him with accurately bored cylinders. Steam power was first used to pump water from the mines by Thomas Savery and Henry Newcomen. Newcomen, a blacksmith of Dartmouth, Devon, invented at the beginning of Anne's reign, a form of engine, which continued in use for a long time. In 1764 James Watt, an engineer who made scientific instruments for Glasgow University, was repairing the model of a Newcomen engine when he was struck by the wastage of heat involved in cooling the cylinder to condense the steam. His good Scottish common sense showed him that there would be a great saving of money and power if condensation took place in a separate vessel. He was backed financially by Roebuck, the owner of the Carron iron-works. Roebuck went bankrupt, and his interest in Watt's ideas passed to one of his creditors, Matthew Boulton, owner of an efficient metalware factory at Soho, Birmingham. By 1782 Watt's atmospheric engine had been changed into a steam engine, with a piston worked by steam and with the addition of a crank and flywheel able to turn shafts and wheels to drive machines. Progress was, however, slow, for relatively few machines were built and their power capacity was small, but steadily more and more were used in British, and in Continental, industry. The Watt engine—there were 320 working in 1800—provided the basis of the railway engine of 1825 and propelled the first steam-driven boat, the *Clermont*, up the river Hudson in 1807.

These immensely important changes in technique precipitated a series of Industrial Revolutions, affecting the country's economic development and moulding anew its society. The change-over from hand methods to mechanical processes resulted in a great increase in output, and led to the irresistible competitive advance of British goods into home and foreign markets. The available figures are startling. At the end of the Seven Years' War, Wedgwood's potteries at Burslem were exporting 550,000 articles to every part of Europe and America. The export of cloth went up from £3,000,000 in 1720 to £5,000,000 by 1790. The consumption of raw cotton increased from 2,000,000 lbs in the 'seventies to 22,000,000 lbs in 1787. Within the twenty

### *The New Upper Class*

years from 1781 to 1801 tonnage leaving British ports had trebled itself. And, despite the temporary set-backs caused by political crises and economic depressions, these figures heralded the future, that wonderful future when Victorian England was literally the workshop of the world.

The construction of factories led to the creation of what amounted in practice to a new society. It was as distinctly graded as the hierarchical society of rural England. It was headed by a new upper class which was soon to invest the ancient strongholds of government and influence, 'a great *mill-monger*,' wrote a contemporary when George III knighted Sir Richard Arkwright, 'is newly *created* a knight though he was not *born* a gentleman.' It was these men rather than the inventors who reaped the profits of the change-over. Arkwright died a millionaire by modern standards. So did the elder Peel who in 1802 employed as many as 15,000 workpeople and paid £40,000 in a single year into the Treasury in excise duties. Samuel Oldknow, a muslin manufacturer, was earning £17,000 a year. It is impossible to generalise about this industrial aristocracy, some of its members were progressive and some reactionary. Josiah Wedgwood, the pottery magnate, sympathised with the American rebels and the French revolutionaries. The business integrity of Matthew Boulton or the public spirit of Peel were unquestionable. But there were others who made little conscience of what they did. Take for example Anthony Bacon, who made a fortune in Maryland before he returned to England as a supply contractor to the army. He was soon involved in negro slaving, owned a mine and developed an ironworks in Glamorgan as well as business interests in Canada and elsewhere. He died immensely rich, having had the shrewdness to become a member of Parliament to avoid too close an inspection of his accounts as a contractor.

The new industrial capitalist possessed great power. He controlled a great industrial proletariat, drawing from their labours and the sale of his goods at home and abroad the riches which he invested in commerce, land, or the factories that he had



### *Georgian England, 1760-1815*

created. It is hardly surprising that his rise coincided with the expansion of banking. His economic mastery opened the closed doors of society and soon provided him with great political influence. Manufacturers blocked the commercial treaty with Ireland in 1785, just as they later led the movement towards free trade. They played an important part in freeing industry from the admittedly outworn regulations imposed on it by the paternal legislation of the Tudors. They took the lead in absorbing smaller concerns into their own larger and more efficient organisations. They played a prominent part in controlling and disciplining labour, such discipline was probably essential to industrial efficiency, but the repression of all working-class movements threatened at the very least to make the workman into an exploited automaton. If their occasional generosity and business foresight contributed to Britain's national prosperity, it is also true that their dominance preceded the rise of a system which has since been discredited.

The industrial worker also felt the full force of the change. Within less than fifty years an industrial proletariat had been formed out of farm workers, Irish and Scottish immigrants and the riff-raff that floats at the bottom of every society. Many new factories had been built, for economic reasons, far from towns, others were in and around great cities. A shift in the centre of gravity of England's population (somewhat over-emphasised by earlier economic historians) followed the growth of the industrial town. Birmingham, the centre of the small metal-ware industry, was said to have witnessed the building of between eight and twelve thousand houses in less than thirty years. Manchester, the centre of the cotton industry, had more than doubled its population in the thirty years 1760-1790. Nor were such figures exceptional, they represented a change in the direction and density of population that was now increasing at a tremendous rate, because of the effects which improvements in medicine had had on the birth and death rates. The Rev. Thomas Malthus argued in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) that over-population meant the pauperisation of the community. It

## *The New Temples of Society*

certainly helped to create a new type of town and a new industrial class

The factories were the temples of the new society, for the factories had replaced the domestic handicraft since the advent of water and steam power. Not entirely, for many of the sweated industries of East London were until recently, and possibly still are, relics of the 'domestic system'. But, generally, workers were gathered together under one roof, in 1816 there were three cotton spinners employing between 1,500, and 1,600 mill-workers each. The introduction of machinery and the application of the new inventions aroused great hostility among the workers, who feared unemployment. The last few decades of the century are full of stories of rioting mobs who burned factories and smashed machinery. The industrial proletariat, boisterous and ignorant, did not bother to analyse the cause of unemployment and low wages and high prices, but attacked what seemed to it to be the logical cause of all its ills, the mills and their owners. Such riots normally occurred during economic crises. With a few exceptions, like Dale and Owen's mills at New Lanark, the conditions of work in the factories were deplorable. This was not the result of deliberate policy on the part of the owners, but the natural sequel to the spread of the belief that free enterprise best suited the interests of the nation. The potency of self-interest was recognised and found to be in harmony with the public good. Adam Smith, who was by no means a whole-hearted believer in *laissez-faire*, admitted that 'every individual is continually exerting himself to find out the most advantageous employment for whatever capital he may command. It is his own advantage, indeed, and not that of the society, which he has in view. But the study of his own advantage naturally, or rather necessarily, leads him to prefer that employment which is most advantageous to the society'. Even the best regulated factories were poorly ventilated and characterised by long hours and low wages.

The condition of the factory worker, and of the apprentice child in particular, was unpleasant. Economic factors made the

workman dependent on his employer for work and wages 'The man,' as Eden said in his *State of the Poor* (1797), 'who has only the unsubstantial property of labour to offer in exchange for the real visible produce of landed property, and whose daily wants require daily exertion, must be almost entirely at the mercy of his employer' And even when he was released from the factory, his normal environment was uninspiring The slums of the great industrial cities still form a potent reminder of the evils of unchecked industrialism. The homes of the factory workers were overcrowded, insanitary and uncomfortable That the worker knew of none better affords no justification for their existence Furthermore the absence of any really interesting recreation, the fewness of the Mechanics' Institutes which were just appearing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the lack of open spaces and allotments, the neglect by the Churches, underlined the monotony of existence. Drunkenness and immorality were the obvious sequel to such living conditions, forming a temporary escape from dismal normality.

The rise of the modern labour movement can be traced back to the steady reaction against these conditions, both among the workers themselves and the members of the upper and middle classes who interested themselves in the problem. The early Socialist thinkers, Thomas Spence, William Ogilvie and Tom Paine, were mainly concerned with agrarian society, but there were a few thinkers who turned their attention on the whole problem of labour. The economist Ricardo, no Socialist himself, made it plain that labour was the source and measure of value. More than a decade earlier, Charles Hall indicted present society in his *The Effects of Civilisation* (1805) 'Wealth,' he said, 'is the possession of that which gives power over, and commands the labour of men' 'Eight-tenths,' he estimated, 'of the people consume only one-eighth of the produce of their labour: hence one day in eight, or one hour in a day, is all the time the poor man is allowed to work for himself, his wife and his children. All the other days . . . he works for other people' Far different in type was the socially minded factory owner

## *The Beginnings of Trade Unions*

Robert Owen, who ran the New Lanark Mills on model lines. They were carefully equipped. No children under ten were employed nor were workers to work more than twelve hours a day. He patronised and built schools and workers' houses, and provided medical attention, a sick fund and a savings bank.

The beginnings of trade unionism were much more important than the thought of a few obscure early Socialists or the schemes of an energetic visionary like Owen. Unions of skilled workmen, little resembling the modern trade union, had been formed in different industries to engage in joint action, whether in defence of hours and wages, or merely to encourage friendly co-operation among the workers, throughout the eighteenth century. Strong enough certainly to alarm the employers by their revolutionary views and occasional strikes, stimulated by the news from Paris, high prices and low wages at home, the unions aroused distrust among the owners of property. The Pitt government passed the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800, which forbade 'unlawful combinations of workmen' and, in theory, of employers to try to raise wages, alter hours of work or organise a strike. Despite a ban which lasted a quarter of a century, organisations among workers persisted.

Yet grey as the picture of industrial society must be, the impression is not completely sombre. The Factory Act of 1802, hopelessly inefficient as it was, was the first sign of government responsibility for regulating hours and conditions of work. Some at least of the working class were living as well, if not better, in their closely cramped quarters in the towns than in their insanitary country cottages. The more intelligent and vigorous rose to positions of trust and responsibility. The great interest in the Mechanics' Institutes, many of which were founded after the Napoleonic Wars had ended, revealed the intensity of the working man's zeal for knowledge and his own wish for self-improvement. A greater sense of responsibility on the owner's part was capped by developing class consciousness on the part of the worker. The few, watery glimmers of a warmer and richer

### Georgian England, 1760-1815

period in the history of the working class, towards which humanitarian opinion and economic supremacy both contributed, are apparent as the period closes

#### 3 *Men and Society*

English society did not centre in any real sense around the court of George III and his German wife, Charlotte. As sombre and dull as those of his two immediate predecessors, it had at least the virtue of being respectable. The King and Queen, Fanny Burney tells us in her delightful *Diary*, were a homely couple with no particular taste or discrimination. But there was a burden of etiquette, court jealousies and tittle-tattle which made life monotonous, exhausting and purposeless. For while it is true that the court set a standard of loyal devotion,<sup>1</sup> and of respectability lacking in early Hanoverian courts, society circled more and more around the Prince Regent after the collapse of the King's health. And respectability was certainly not the keynote of the Prince Regent's court at Carlton House or the Pavilion at Brighton, but it set the *bon ton* for society. The Prince has been called the 'First Gentleman in Europe', neither his manners nor his morals were unimpeachable and yet his court was at least lively, elegant and, within certain limits, cultured. Social behaviour was then brilliant, flirtatious and sophisticated, but often insincere and superficial. There was a true appreciation of culture and wit, but the outward show was nevertheless different from the historic reality. High society was sparkling, but neither fastidious nor discriminating in important matters. *Toujours la politesse*, but *la politesse* was often underlined by deceit and intrigue. Truth was sacrificed for the sake of an epigram. In fact the hunting aristocrat or the rather shabby noble in his town house were more representative of the social

<sup>1</sup> The three elder princesses attended a performance of *He Would be a Soldier* and *Aladdin* in April, 1789, 'attired in celestial blue silks, and their head dresses distinguished by brilliant bandeaus of *God save the King*'.

### *The Expansion of London*

trend than the 'hot-house' brilliance of Regency Society. For while the latter soon vanished, the former provided the foundation for the homely sobriety of the Victorian court with its tradition of social respectability and good works

But it is, of course, absurd to gauge the social temperature of an age by high society alone. The real life of England was concentrated in its farms and villages, in its factories and cities, rather than at Carlton House or Windsor Castle. London life retained its easy pre-eminence in spite of the fast-growing population of many provincial towns, its population increased from 674,000 to 1,774,000 between 1700 and 1815. There were a series of building booms during the period, occasioned partly by an increased demand for town houses by the country gentlemen, partly by the migration of prosperous citizens from their businesses in the City towards new homes in the west of London, but chiefly because of the enormous increase in the numbers of the labouring and shopkeeping class.

One of the most significant facts about this expansion is that it was very largely the result of private enterprise, resting on trading wealth. Apart from the houses and public buildings, London was enriched in this period by new bridges to span the Thames and new docks to house the city's shipping. Westminster Bridge established a fine precedent in bridge-making which resulted later in the century in Vauxhall Bridge, Waterloo and Southwark Bridges, all connected indelibly with the name of their architect, Rennie. Private enterprise was also responsible for the new docks. London's shipping increased in proportion to her growing wealth from overseas trade. But the dock area controlled by the existing Port Authority, the City of London, was becoming entirely inadequate to the shippers' needs. Parliament passed an act in 1799, empowering the City to buy land and build a dock in the Isle of Dogs. In the next twenty-five years private enterprise promoted and planned the West India Dock (1800), the London Dock at Wapping (1802), Surrey Docks (1804), the East India Docks (1804) at Blackwall, and St. Katharine's Dock (1825).

### *Georgian England, 1760-1815*

All this reflects the dominance of mercantile and financial interests in the capital as well as in the leading provincial cities. There were important developments in finance and business. The Bank of England became a national institution, with privileges which amounted to a practical monopoly of joint-stock banking and the banking business of the state. It had very powerful connections with all the great business firms of the age, especially with the sugar and slaving merchants of the West Indies and the linen drapers and warehousemen of Manchester. The London and country banks functioned as centres for deposits as well as for short and long term loans to industry and commerce. Most of these banks could trace their origin to some trading house which had started banking as a sideline. Sampson Lloyd, an important figure in Birmingham's iron trade, who was related by marriage with the Barclays of Barclay and Frearne, joined with a Mr Taylor, who made buttons and japanware, to start Lloyds Bank in 1764-1765. The war period saw a vast number of new banks, the 230 banks of 1797 had risen to 940 by 1814. The reasons for this change are clear. The government's need of money led to the negotiation of many private loans, some of which had to be transferred as subsidies to foreign powers. The private bankers were excellently suited to carry out this task as well as to finance the trade in munitions and the expanding cotton industry.

But the threefold pillars on which the State rested, land, property and trade, inevitably were founded on the labour of the majority of England's twenty millions. The farmer's wealth came from his ploughmen and labourers. The factory-owners depended on the work of thousands of industrial employees. The merchant controlled many different types of workers: the clerk, the docker and the stevedore as well as the sailors who manned the East Indiamen, or the numerous shopkeepers and artisans whose livelihood depended on continuing prosperity. The ordinary workers' standard of life varied greatly. A small minority lived comfortably within its means, a sober, dependable class of society. The vast majority lived in insecurity, making

### *The Poor and Humanitarianism*

both ends meet with some difficulty and in constant fear of unemployment or the debtors' prisons.

The Poor Law, the Game Laws and the inequalities of the Penal Code cast a sombre light on the conditions of working-class life in the town and country. The Poor Law was in dire need of reform, many of the workhouses were appalling. Sir George Nicholls testified that the 'Parish poorhouses . . . were little better than receptacles for the vile, the dissolute and the depraved, together with some who were infirm or imbecile, and a few who were simply destitute and dependent' No important change had taken place (despite the humanitarian tendency of Gilbert's Act of 1782) except the initiation of indiscriminate outdoor relief which resulted from the meeting of the local Justices at the Pelican Inn, Speenhamland, Berkshire, in 1795. The poor rate increased prodigiously, making a radical reform of the law necessary long before 1834.

And yet the age which was ending in 1815 was notable both for its humanitarianism and the improvements in manners and municipal administration which it witnessed. John Howard's work in prisons, James Neild's efforts for the relief of debtors, and Romilly and Mackintosh's demand for a fairer penal code showed that the tradition, so well represented by Jonas Hanway earlier, continued. This all-round improvement was reflected in the appearance and manners of London and the provincial cities. Improvement commissions of all kinds—for lighting and paving the streets, for drainage and water-supply—had been set up by bodies of public-spirited citizens who were given powers to levy a rate to pay for their work. There was, as the Gordon riots of 1780 showed, still the danger of mob riots, as well as a great deal of crime and drunkenness. But all observers were convinced that the streets were cleaner and safer, the people more orderly, prosperous and courteous than they had been fifty years earlier. In part this may have been a result of the better administration of justice, of the disappearance of the corrupt 'trading justice,' and of a new tradition of efficient and honest administration of the law, started by the brothers Fielding



who presided successively over the magistrates' court at Bow Street.

Improvements in medicine also played a major part in the transformation of the capital and big cities. The decreasing mortality rate was the principal cause of the tremendous growth of the population. It was now that Edinburgh, where a group of intelligent and conscientious professors founded a first-class school of clinical medicine, established its great reputation as a medical centre. The effects of this good teaching and greater emphasis on scientific precision became more marked as they spread to the ordinary practitioner. Surgery, in particular, benefited from this new-found interest. William Smellie (1697-1763) was a leading obstetrician, but he was surpassed in fame as anatomist and surgeon by William Hunter (1718-1783) and his brother, John (1728-1793). John Hunter's powers of research, observation and rational analysis were so marked that he deserves to be entitled the father of surgical pathology. Hunter had many famous pupils, but Edward Jenner surpassed them all in importance. Smallpox was the scourge of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century society. The introduction of inoculation by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the wife of the British ambassador to Turkey where inoculation was practised, was the start of better things. The man who found the real remedy was an attractive country doctor, Edward Jenner (1749-1823), on May 13th, 1796, Jenner 'vaccinated' an eight-year-old boy, James Phipps, with pus from the hand of a dairymaid who was suffering from cowpox. A month later Phipps was inoculated with smallpox, but the disease did not appear. This was one of the most significant events in eighteenth-century history for it marked the beginning of the end of a disease which had killed and scarred millions.

And yet the real progress was possibly less in actual discovery than in the public's realisation of the importance of the principles of medical hygiene. A cleric of great scientific ability, Stephen Hales, preached better ventilation. Sir John Pringle (1707-1782) insisted on the need for better medical treatment of the troops

## *The Dawn of Scientific Medicine*

and was the first man to make use of the word 'antiseptic.'<sup>1</sup> What Pringle was to the Army, Lind was to the Navy. Lack of fresh food led to a high mortality rate caused by scurvy among the sailors. 'In such a situation,' said Lind, 'the ignorant sailor and the learned physician will equally long . . . for green vegetables and the earth.' The answer was, for once, a lemon. Lemon or lime juice reduced the incidence of scurvy until it disappeared altogether. The government's window tax remained a major obstacle to fresh air, but there had been other improvements to counteract follies of this nature, including an increasing number of hospitals and the start of the all-important public dispensary—connected with the energetic and far-sighted Dr. Lettsom. Thus the eighteenth century witnessed the dawn of scientific medicine, which had a tremendous effect upon the health of the people and was perhaps the most important single factor in the great increase in the population.

In general, the period was one of notable improvement, despite its obvious vices and defects. The rise of humanitarian feeling was the most salient factor in the last few decades of the century, and in its general benevolence and charity it anticipated the spirit of Charles Dickens (who was born in 1812), which had so great a hold over Victorian society.

### *4 Literature and Culture*

The period, 1760–1815, was marked by a great advance towards sweetness and light and was extraordinarily rich in literary achievement. In general, men and women had an exceptionally high standard of taste. Why this was so is not at all clear. The Universities and public schools were still sunk in academic slumber, even if they gave contemporaries an acquaintance with classical literature which sometimes endured throughout life. Carteret, it may be recalled, died with the words of the *Iliad* on

<sup>1</sup> He also married the daughter of Dr. Oliver of Bath whose name has been immortalised by a biscuit.

his lips C J Fox was an inveterate lover of the classics Even the Prince Regent, as Byron told Scott in 1812, 'spoke alternatively of Homer and yourself and seemed well-acquainted with both' A classical education tended to train the mind in judgment and to provide an excellent basis for cultivating other studies, but it does not alone account for good taste Certainly the development of journalism<sup>1</sup> and the foundation of the great quarterlies, the *Edinburgh Review* (1802) and the *Quarterly* (1809), reflected a great expansion of the reading public who wanted information and criticism The real answer cannot be found in any one contributory cause; it arises from the fact that the atmosphere of eighteenth-century society was amenable to critical judgment and literary and artistic appreciation to a greater extent than most earlier or later periods of history.

Dr. Johnson stands as the arbiter of taste at the beginning of the period His contributions to literature were miscellaneous: articles to the *Rambler*, the *Lives of the Poets*, poems on *London* and the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, a novel (*Rasselas*), and that great labour, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) To know Johnson, one has to read the *Life* written by that affable but ne'er-do-well Scottish laird, James Boswell Nothing lives so well in the whole of English literature as this Boswell becomes of secondary importance Johnson booms and struts across the stage, a master of criticism and judgment, now stroking his cat Hodge, or supping with Mrs Thrale, or dominating the famous Literary Club, the greatest literary character of all time

If Oliver Goldsmith was built on a smaller scale, he was equally versatile One of life's failures by the standards of the world, his powers as a playwright, especially in *She Stoops to Conquer*, as an essayist, critic, poet and novelist, were very considerable His poem, the *Deserted Village*, interesting to an historian as a contemporary view of the effects of enclosure, is finely descriptive

<sup>1</sup> The *Morning Chronicle* started in 1769, the *Morning Post* in 1772; the *Morning Herald* in 1780, and above all, *The Times*, founded in 1785 (though not under that title until 1788) by John Walter. *The Observer* was established in 1791

### 'Gothick'

HIS novel, the *Vicar of Wakefield*, touches the heart by its genuine simplicity and goodness.

In general, fiction witnessed a decline and fall, followed by a revival, both from the standpoint of the novelist and the taste of the literary public. Fanny Burney's *Evelina* (1778) was, perhaps, the last representative of natural sensibility, she portrayed home life with a convincing realism and a fine sense of character. Soon after this, sense and sensibility were pressed under by a welter of fantastic romances, of which Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) marked the start. The cult reached a climax in the *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) by Mrs Radcliffe and in Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*. The medieval past, full of ruined 'Gothick' castles, grisly skeletons, clanking chains, murder and violence, swooning heroines and abandoned villains, all contained within a pleasing frame of sensation, supernaturalism and romance, formed the literary fare of thousands of readers. Equally extraordinary but different in character was that dilettante millionaire William Beckford's oriental romance, *Vathek*. The return to normality, if it is possible to formulate a norm in these matters, was the work of two novelists of very different make-up, Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) and Jane Austen (1775-1817). Scott was as much interested as Lewis and his contemporaries in the medieval past, but he had a truer historical sense. His work was realistic and intensely interesting. Although Jane Austen showed no awareness of the world-shaking events on the Continent, no writer ever possessed such penetrating powers of observation nor such spirited good-humour. The verisimilitude of her stories, *Northanger Abbey*, *Mansfield Park*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Persuasion* and *Sense and Sensibility*, reveals her undoubted mastery of her craft.

Poetry, suffering from no such aberration as fiction underwent between Fanny Burney and Jane Austen, was mainly affected by the impact of the Romantic movement. Thus, while William Cowper (1731-1800) did not theorise about his poetry, his work reveals a definite advance towards naturalism. The setting of his life was tragic, redeemed only by fitful gleams of contentment,

the sun glinting through the house at Olney, the pet hares with which he loved to play and the kindly patronage of Lady Austen. But, apart from the *Castaway*, the affectionate and happy side of his nature appears in his poetry, *The Task* remains a delightful work, full of exquisite versification, landscape pictures and simple, gracious moralisation.

The true poem is always embedded in its social and political environment. Thus it is no accident that the French Revolution coincided with a renaissance in English poetry, a stretching out beyond the bounds of convention towards sheer, soaring song. The poets of 1790 greeted the new age with enthusiasm, even if many of them later retracted and became good Tories. Furthermore, they carried poetry a stage further away from the artificialities of classicism towards the upsurge of romantic feeling. Blake, as the oldest and most isolated figure, was also the most enigmatic. He was at his best and most lyrical when he was sheerly imaginative, for his visions, cloudy and obscure as they often are, have a golden heart. 'I am,' he said, 'really drunk with intellectual vision.' His greater poems, like his illustrations to the Book of Job, are extraordinary if obscurely powerful. 'Did you ever see a fairy's funeral, madam?' he once asked an astonished lady. 'I have, but not before last night. I saw a procession of the size and colour of green and grey grasshoppers bearing a body laid on a roseleaf, which they buried with songs, and then disappeared.' Influenced by his Swedenborgian upbringing, fired with revolutionary enthusiasm, William Blake remained a solitary figure.

What is sometimes called the Lake School of Poets had greater consistency. Robert Southey does not stand in the front rank of the poets, but his experience was characteristic. He became a supporter of Revolution, wrote rather pedestrian poems with a political theme and made friends with Coleridge. Together, they planned to found a Utopia on the banks of the Susquehanna river in America, but the great ideal of Pantisocracy faded and Southey became an orthodox Tory, reaping his reward when Lord Liverpool recommended him for the Poet-Laureateship in 1813. Coleridge remained more faithful. This son of a dreamy Devon

clergyman had bewildering gifts as a philosopher, poet, literary critic and talker. His *Ancient Mariner*, written in 1798, the year after he had begun that grim opium habit, had magic and romance uniquely combined and is one of the finest stories of the creative imagination ever written. William Wordsworth completes the trio. The impassioned revolutionary enthusiasm found a ready response in his heart, even if it was transmuted after the rise of Napoleon into purely patriotic song. It was during his sojourn in this period, first at Alfoxden in Somerset and then at Grasmere in the Lakes, that his intense satisfaction in the contemplation of nature produced the most serenely moving of his poems, *The Prelude*, *The Ode to Immortality*, *The Recluse*, *The Excursion*. His best work was done by 1814, and the beginnings of the long autumn of his genius saw the rise of a new, perhaps more brilliant school of rebels—Byron, Shelley and Keats.

The litterateurs of the period were nothing if not versatile. There were few departments of culture which they did not adorn. The brilliance of Sheridan's plays, the barbed wit and elegant courtesies of Chesterfield's *Letters*, the acid, in an earlier period of Hervey's *Memoirs*, all add their tribute to the many-sided character of Georgian literature. Perhaps the historian Edward Gibbon is the epitome of the age. Outwardly, an ordinary English gentleman, comfortable and complacent, portly and knowledgeable, the fascinating little man bore genius with him. He came, saw Rome and conquered, in the magnificent *Decline and Fall*. 'It was on the fifteenth of October in the gloom of evening, as I sat musing on the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were chanting their litanies in the temple of Jupiter, that I conceived the first thought of my history.' Whatever errors of fact or interpretation there are in the work, *The Decline and Fall* was drawn, as G. M. Young says, 'with the integrity of a scholar, and coloured with the intention of an artist.'

Gibbon also wrote his *Autobiography*. Interest in personal activities was certainly another characteristic feature of the literature of the period. Men delighted in diaries, whether they might be a Parson Woodforde or a Lord Torrington, letters and

personal memoirs Horace Walpole, son of Sir Robert, was a member of Parliament for twenty-seven years and owned a sham 'Gothick' mansion at Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, of which he was very proud, and posed as the arbiter of literary and artistic taste; he left four thousand letters apart from his *Memoirs*. Nearly every letter is a gem, scintillating, often atrabilious, anecdotal, fastidious and entertaining. But the majority of the diarists and letter-writers were obscure men, they mean very little to the general historian of the period. Yet through their perusal it is possible to visualise the gargantuan meals, the joys of the hunt, the musical entertainments, the glistening silks and satins, the courtly bow, the ease of snuff-taking, the flourishing of tricornered hats and the trivialities of everyday life. Therein lies their value to the historian.

Nor did the age neglect philosophy, science or economics. The names of Priestley, Joseph Black, the Quaker Dalton and Sir Humphry Davy reveal that there was a close association between the development of scientific ideas and industrial and social change. Dugald Stewart, Adam Smith, T. R. Malthus and Ricardo illustrate the growing interest in the science of how men live. Finally, Berkeley and Hume were masters of philosophical speculation. Berkeley, an Irish bishop (*d.* 1753), held that there was no distinction between the reality of ideas and the things which they are supposed to represent. 'The essence of his doctrine consists in two propositions—that the objects (or ideas) of sight have nothing in common with the objects (or ideas) of touch, and that the connection of sight and touch is arbitrary, and learned by experience only.' David Hume, Scottish metaphysician and historian (*d.* 1776) carried the empirical philosophy of Locke and Berkeley to its logical conclusion. Taking Locke's view that knowledge was the result of sensation and reflection, he urged that knowledge was the effect of an impression and that impression is dependent for its validity on the circumstances that give rise to it. He came near to assuming the innate relativity of knowledge and has most claim to be regarded as the father of modern philosophical scepticism.

5. *Music, Painting and Architecture*

The period 1760-1815 was a transitional epoch in music, painting and architecture as in everything else. Musically, the period was rather uninteresting. England did not boast any real successor to Handel. Arne did not die until 1778, there were some prolific writers of Church anthems. But, generally speaking, the period was better known for appreciation than production. Amateur musical entertainments played an important part in the life of town and country, orchestras often performed works of the great Continental composers of the age, whether at the popular concerts held in the great public gardens at Ranelagh or Vauxhall, or in the salon of some town or country house.

Painting was marked by the apotheosis of the portrait. The landed classes, the great merchants, the Indian 'nabobs,' proud of their wealth and culture, their benevolence and charity, wished to perpetuate their memory, to line the walls of their mansions with their portraits. Fortunately for posterity the men they chose to paint them were capable, masters of their craft, the insincerity which had marred earlier portraits appears less rarely, most obviously perhaps in the facile and glossy portraits of Sir Thomas Lawrence, the most fashionable painter of Regency Society. Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) painted both portraits and landscapes. Although critics have concluded that 'he painted portraits for money and landscapes for love,' both reflect sustained feeling and extreme sensitivity to colour and atmosphere. His friend and rival, Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) was a west-countryman of great versatility, one of the founders of the Literary Club. His paintings lack the lyrical quality that makes Gainsborough's work so refreshing, but his child studies are notable for their candour and freshness. His portraits are urbane, intellectual, worldly in a good sense, like their creator. Reynolds was disliked by his contemporary, George Romney (1734-1802), whose paintings, so many of them inspired



by his infatuation for Lady Hamilton, are less finished and of more varied quality than those of Gainsborough or Reynolds

So brief a summary affords little real idea of what was happening in British art in the period. In its greatest representatives it had secured its release from the limitations imposed by the society which patronised it. Art had not, except through the medium of a Hogarth or a William Blake, become democratic, but it was in the process of ceasing to be purely aristocratic. The tradition of portraiture was beginning to run in different channels, in the landscapes of Turner and Constable, whose loveliness brought pictures before a wider circle of people, for a man who was unimpressed by the portrait of a handsome peer might well be instinctively refreshed by the trees and streams which formed part of his ordinary background.

By an historical paradox, the middle and closing years of the century saw architecture develop towards increasing elegance and charm while the miserable slums and barrack-like factories grew weed-like in industrial England. The exponent of new design was a Scottish architect, Robert Adam, who had studied in Rome and had been unforgettably impressed by the ruins of Diocletian's palace at Spalato (Split). Although his work was very varied, he initiated a revolution in decoration that influenced the patterns of pottery and textiles, as well as furniture, doors, grates and buildings. 'We have adopted,' he said, 'a beautiful variety of light mouldings, gracefully formed, delicately enriched and arranged with propriety and skill'. Many illustrations of his work are possible: the interiors of No. 20 Portman Square (now the Courtauld Institute), Syon House, Isleworth; Kedleston in Derbyshire, and Mellerstain in Berwick. He was an original architect who rejected the Palladian style of his contemporaries and yet his style, lovely as it is, reflects the artificiality of the society for which he worked.

His contemporaries are less well known. There were those who developed his ideas, there was also a new generation which knew not Adam nor wished to know him. James Wyatt, the Surveyor-General from 1796-1813, was perhaps the most

### *James Wyatt*

interesting. He began as a Classic, and at the age of twenty-five was commissioned to build the Pantheon (1771), a 'winter Ranelagh' which Edward Gibbon summed up as 'in point of ennui and magnificence . . . the wonder of the eighteenth century and the British Empire'. In the following decades Wyatt built or redecorated in classical style, Etruscan in ornament, a series of homes and public institutions. Heaton Hall in Lancashire, Dodington in Gloucestershire, the Radcliffe Observatory, Oxford, and possibly Crichel in Dorset, where is to be found 'one of the loveliest of eighteenth-century rooms' in the 'whole of Europe'. Then there was an astonishing change. He, whose Graeco-Italian style had been so noticeable for its classical refinement, now built a 'Gothick' castle, Lee Priory at Ashridge, and the most famous of gimcrack abbeys, Beckford's Fonthill in Wiltshire. This fantastic break-away from what he now called Adam's 'corrupt style' was not copied by another anti-Adam architect, Henry Holland. Holland, who remained faithful to the classical tradition, was simpler and more discreet; all his buildings—Brooks's Club, the first Carlton House (1787) and Southill, Bedfordshire (for the Whig leader, Samuel Whitbread)—show his close association with the Whig tradition. 'You cannot,' said Horace Walpole of his work, 'call it magnificent, it is the taste and propriety that strike.'

With Holland we are close to the Regency period. There was very little building during the Napoleonic Wars because of mounting expenses in building, shortage of labour and Baltic timber, Soane's Bank of England and Smirke's Mint were the only two outstanding buildings of the period. The most perfect representative of the Regency period was John Nash. When he was forty-six years old, he married (rumour insisted that his wife was the mistress of the Prince Regent). Whatever the circumstances, the marriage marked a change in his fortunes. Hitherto a rather unsuccessful speculative builder, he now began to work in close collaboration with his patron, the Prince Regent, at buildings that are supremely satisfying—Regent's Park, Regent Street and Carlton House Terrace, among others. He was

*Georgian England, 1760-1815*

placed in charge of George's greatest eccentricity, the Chinese Pavilion at Brighton, but his genius was essentially urban, and perhaps more grandiose in plan than in execution. Nash had contemporaries of skill and ability, but they were living at the end of an epoch. Refinement of manners and elegance of building both withdrew under the pressure of a more vital, less aristocratic, more philistine society. It was an inevitable development, but it is with something of a sigh that one remembers that it was still possible to build a really lovely house in 1815, and then . . . drabness and dullness descended like a cloud.

## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX II

### LIST OF CONTEMPORARY RULERS

#### *I The Holy Roman Empire*

Charles VI: 1711-1740.

Maria Teresa 1740-1742 (Queen of Hungary) Empress:  
1745-1780.

Charles VII. 1742-1745.

Francis I 1745-1765

Joseph II 1765-1790

Leopold II 1790-1792.

Francis II 1792-1806 (continued as Emperor of Austria  
until 1835)

#### *II France*

Louis XV 1715-1774.

Louis XVI. 1774-1793

National Convention 1793-1795

The Directory 1795-1799

The Consulate (Napoleon Bonaparte First Consul).  
1799-1804

Napoleon I. 1804-1814. 1815.

Louis XVIII 1814-1824

## *Appendix II*

### *III. Spain*

Philip V. 1700-1746

Ferdinand VI 1746-1759.

Charles III 1759-1788

Charles IV. 1788-1808

Joseph Bonaparte. 1808-1814

### *IV. Prussia*

Frederick William I 1713-1740

Frederick II. 1740-1786

Frederick William II. 1786-1797.

Frederick William III. 1797-1840

### *V. Russia*

Peter I 1682-1725.

Catherine I 1725-1727.

Peter II. 1727-1730.

Anne 1730-1740

Ivan VI. 1740-1741.

Elizabeth 1741-1762.

Peter III: 1762

Catherine II 1762-1796.

Paul. 1796-1801

Alexander I. 1801-1825.

*List of Contemporary Rulers*

*VI. Savoy and Sardinia*

Victor Amadeus II Duke of Savoy 1675-1730, King of  
Sicily 1713-1720, King of Sardinia 1720-1730 (abd.).

Charles Emmanuel III. 1730-1773.

Victor Amadeus III. 1773-1796.

Charles Emmanuel IV. 1796-1802 (abd.).

Victor Emmanuel I. 1802-1823 (abd.).

*VII. Netherlands*

William IV. 1748-1751 (Stadtholder).

William V: 1751-1802 (dep.) (Stadtholder).

Republic: 1802-1806.

Louis Bonaparte. 1806-1810

French Empire: 1810-1814.

William I King of Netherlands: 1815-1840. (Belgium  
seceded 1830.)

*VIII. Poland*

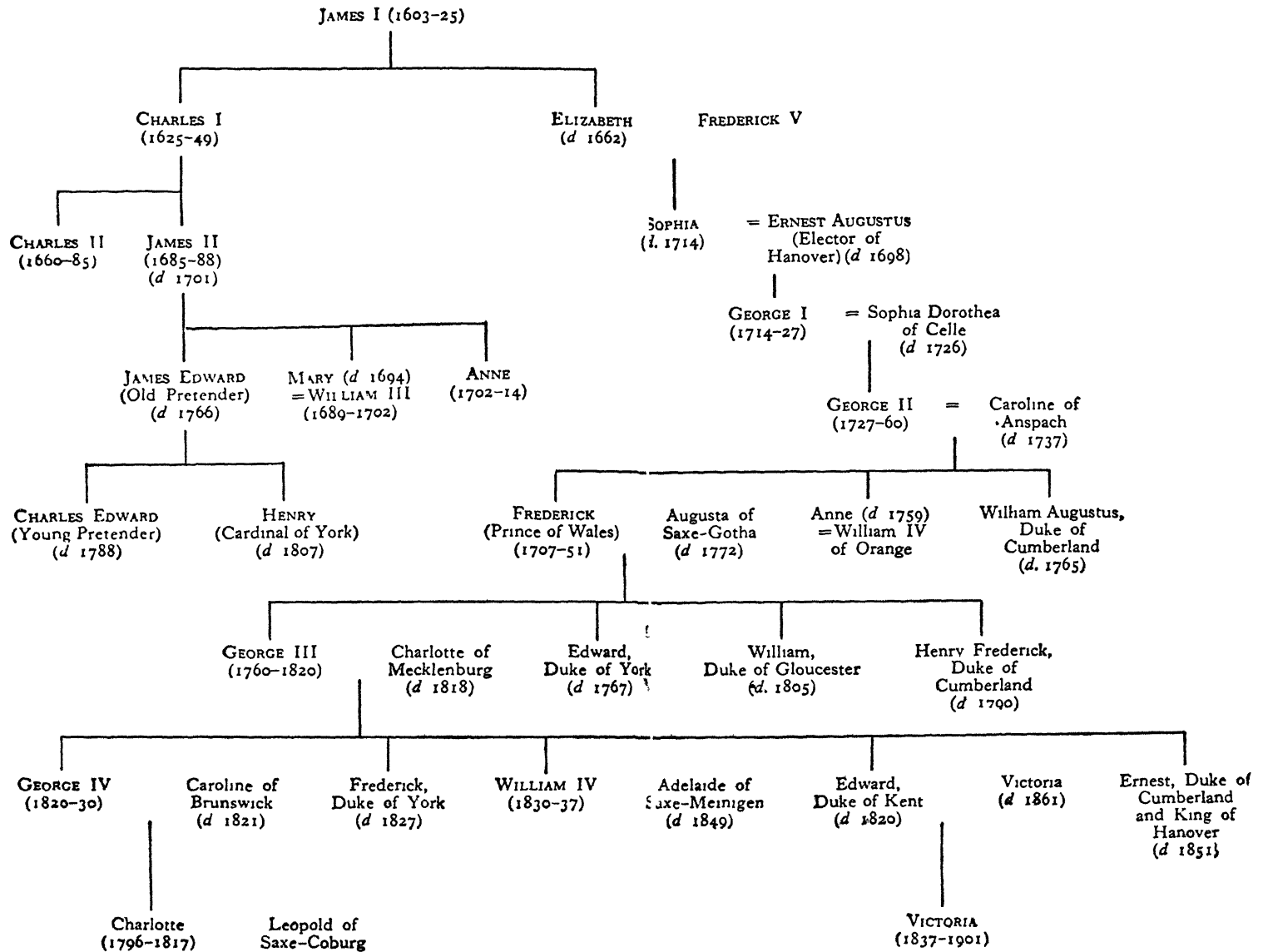
Augustus II. 1696-1733.

Augustus III: 1733-1763.

Stanislaus Poniatowski: 1763-1795.



APPENDIX III  
STUARTS AND HANOVERIANS





# APPENDIX IV: TIME CHART 1714-1815

LT = First Lord of the Treasury  
 SN = Secretary for Northern Dept.  
 SS = Secretary for Southern Dept.  
 CE = Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Ministry.	England.	Colonies.	Europe.
1714 Townshend (SN '14-16)	George I Kg		Philip V marr Eliz Farnese.
1715 Stanhope	Jacobite rebellion		Orleans Fr. Regent.
1716 Stanhope	Septennial Act.		
1717 (SS '14-16)	Triple Alliance		
1718 SN '16-17 '18- 21 CE. '17-18)	Quadruple Alliance.		
1719	War with Spain. Defoe's <i>Robinson Crusoe</i>		Tr of Passarowitz, B Cape Passaro.
	South Sea Bubble.		Fall of Alberoni
1720 Townshend	Jacobite 'Plot'		Pragmatic Sanction.
1721 (SN. '21-30)	Wood's Halfpence		Tr of Nystadt
1723 Walpole	Carteret's resignation.		Ostend Co est
1724 (LT. '21-42).			Bourbon Fr Regent
1725			Congress of Cambrai.
	Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i>		Tr of Vienna.
1726	George II Kg.		Tr. of Hanover.
1727	War with Spain.		Fall of Ripperda
			Fleury Fr minister.
1728	Methodists at Oxford		
1729	Fall of Townshend		Congress of Soissons
1730			Tr. of Seville.

[illegible]

# APPENDIX IV TIME CHART 1714-1815

Ministry	England.	Colonies.	Europe
1747 1748 1749	Bolingbroke's <i>Patriot King</i> Fielding's <i>Tom Jones</i> End of Asiento Fred P of Wales dies New-style Calendar	Dupleix takes control of the Carnatic  Clive takes Arcot Relief of Trichinopoly	Tr. of Aix-la-Chapelle
1750 1751 1752 1753 1754		Congress of Albany Dupleix recalled Braddock def at Ft Duquesne Black Hole of Calcutta Fr take Ft Oswego	Treaty of Versailles Fr take Minorca Fred II invades Saxony B Koln B Hastingbeck Convention of Klosterseven B Rossbach B Leuthen B Zorndorf B Rheinberg B Crefeld Choiseul Fr minister.
1755	Anglo-Russian Convention Convention of Westminster War with France	Clive takes Calcutta B Plassey.	B Minden
1756 Dexonshire (LT '56-7)		Brit take Louisburg	
1757 Wm Pitt (SS '56-7 SS '57-61) Newcastle (LT '57-62)	Handel dies	Brit take Guadeloupe	
1758			
1759			

1759		Fall of Quebec.	B Kunersdorf Charles III Kg of Spain. B Lagos B. Quiberon Bay Russians occupy Berlin
1760	George III Kg Sterne's <i>Tristram Shandy</i>	Fall of Montreal B Wandewash Clive leaves Bengal Brit take Pondicherry	
1761	Bute (SN '61-2 LT '62-3).	Brit take Martinique, Havana and Manila	Peter III Czar Prusso-Russian alliance Catherine II Czarina Treaty of Hubertusburg
1762		Sugar Act Stamp Act Clive returns to Bengal Grant of <i>diwani</i> Dual system in India Repeal of Stamp Act Declaratory Act Clive leaves India War with Hyder Ali of Mysore	
1763	Treaty of Paris No 45 North Briton. Wilkes expelled	Townshend's duties Hyder Ali overruns Carnatic	Russo-Turkish War.
1764			
1765	Rockingham (LT '65-6)		
1766	Chatham (L Privy Seal '66-8)	Goldsmith's <i>Vicar of Wakefield</i> .	
1767			
1768	Grafton (LT '68-70)	Middlesex election Royal Academy est Watt patents steam- engine Arkwright's Water- Frame Wedgwood's Etruria works	
1769			

# APPENDIX IV TIME CHART 1714-1815

Ministry.	England	Colonies.	Europe
1770 North (L.T. '70-82)	Hargreaves' Spinning- Jenny patented Burke's <i>Present</i> <i>Discontents</i> Whitefield dies Smollett's <i>Humphrey</i> <i>Clinker</i> Coke at Holkham	Cook at N S W	Fall of Choiseul.
1771			
1772		Warren Hastings in Bengal	1st Partition of Poland
1773		India Regulating Act	Suppression of Jesuits.
1774	Burke's <i>American</i> <i>Taxation</i>	Boston Tea Riot	Louis XVI Kg
	Fox joins Whigs	Boston Port Act	Tr of Kutchuk- Kainardji.
1775		Quebec Act	
		B Lexington	
		B Bunker's Hill	
		Annexation of Benares (India)	
1776	Adam Smith's <i>Wealth</i> <i>of Nations</i> Gibbon's <i>Decline and</i> <i>Fall</i>	Declaration of American Independence	
1777	France declares war.		War of Bavarian Succn.
1778	Chatham dies	Fall of Saratoga	
	Spain declares war	War with Hyder Ali of Mysore.	1st Armed Neutrality.
1779	Crompton's Spinning- Mule.		

1779	Irish Volunteer movement	Captain Cook killed.	
1780	Britain declares war on Dutch Gordon Riots	Judicial reforms in Bengal Hyder Ali invades Carnatic B Porto Novo (India) Fall of Yorktown. B of the Saints Peace with the Mahrattas (India)	Maria Teresa dies.
1781			
1782	Rockingham (L.T. '82) Shelburne (L.T. '82-3) Portland (L.T. '83).		
1783	Irish Legislative Independence. Preliminaries of Peace Economic Reform Treaty of Versailles Fox's India Bill rejected Dr. Johnson dies	India Act	
1784	Wm Pitt (L.T. '83-01)		
1785	Cartwright's powerloom Anglo-French Commercial Tr	Peace with Mysore Hastings leaves India. Cornwallis in Bengal.	Fred II dies.
1786			
1787		Trial W Hastings (to '95) Sierra Leone Co est Phillip's expedn to N S W.	
1788	Triple Alliance <i>The Times</i> published George III's illness.		Fall of Bastille States-General met
1789			
1790	Nootka Sound dispute Burke's <i>Reflections</i> Paine's <i>Rights of Man</i> .	War with Tippu Sahib of Mysore Canada Act	Flight to Varennes.
1791			



# APPENDIX IV: TIME CHART 1714-1815

Ministry.	England.	Colonies.	Europe.
1791	Tone founds United Irishmen		Manifesto of Pillnitz
1792	London Corres Soc founded.	Tippu def at Srirangapatam.	France at war with Austria and Prussia September Massacres Suspension of monarchy B. Jemappes Louis XVI exec. French declare war on Britain Reign of Terror French invasion of Low Countries Directory est Tr of Basle.
1793	Godwin's <i>Political Justice</i> Board of Agric est'	Dundas Pres of Board of Control for India	
1794	Naval Battle June 1st		
1795	Speenhamland settlement Acts against Sedition. Fitzwilliam LL of Ireland recalled French landing in Ireland Jenner uses vaccination Naval mutinies at the Nore and Spithead	Occupn of Cape of Good Hope	Napoleon's Italian campaign B Cape St Vincent. B Camperdown Tr of Campo Formio French expedn to Egypt B of the Nile Siege of Acre.
1796			
1797			
1798	Irish rebellion. B Vinegar Hill	Wellesley GG of India	
1799	Anti-Combination Acts	Conquest of Mysore	

1799	C M S founded	Tippu killed	Formation of Second Coalition Suvarov's Swiss campaign Napoleon First Consul B Marengo B Hohenlinden Armed Neutrality formed Tr of Lunéville B Copenhagen
1800	Irish Act of Union.		
1801	Addington (LT '01-4)		
1802	Pitt's resignation.		
	Tr of Amiens 1st Factory Act <i>Edinburgh Review</i> est War with France	War with Mahrattas Bs Assaye Argauum	
1803			
1804	Pitt (LT. '04-6)		
1805	Dalton's Atomic Theory War with Spain	Wellesley recalled from India Cape reoccupied	Napoleon Emperor. Third Coalition B Trafalgar B Austerlitz End Holy Roman Emp. Confederation of Rhine B Jena Berlin Decrees B Friedland Tr of Tilsit Copenhagen bombarded Fr attack Portugal Napoleon occupies Spain Peninsular War Convention of Cintra Moore at Corunna
1806	Grenville (LT '06-7)		
1807	Portland (LT '07-9)	Minto GG of India	
1808			
1809			

# APPENDIX IV: TIME CHART 1714-1815

Ministry.	England.	Colonies.	Europe.
1809 Perceval (LT, '09-12).	Walcheren expedn	Macquarie in N S W	Austria at war with Napoleon Bs Aspern and Wagram B Talavera Massena attacks Portugal. Torres Vedras B Fuentes d'Onoro Capt Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz B Salamanca Retreat from Moscow B Vitoria Fr expelled from Spain B Leipzig B Toulouse Allied invasion of France Tr of Chaumont Napoleon abd Tr of Paris Congress of Vienna. The Hundred Days. B Waterloo 2nd Tr of Paris.
1810	Geo III insane		
1811	War with U S A		
1812 Liverpool (LT, '12-27)	1st steam boat on Clyde Castlereagh For. Sec.		
1813		E India Co's monopoly ended.	
1814	Scott's <i>Waverley</i> Tr of Ghent (with U S A)		
1815			

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Foord's article, which was published after the completion of this book, forms a useful appendix to earlier remarks (pp 39, 41-2). He analyses the sources of the "influence" by which the Crown dominated political life, viz money, patronage, honours and "imperceptible influence" (which included such matters as the award of valuable contracts, loan issues and the leases of crown lands) and he concludes that this power faded between 1782 and 1832. He summarises his conclusions as follows "It was effected, not by any enactment or group of enactments, but by a long train of legislation, administrative reform, and changed attitudes in public life. The forces motivating these alterations were the constant pressure of opposition parties striving to reduce ministerial power, the need for economy and retrenchment after the American Revolution and during and after the French Revolution, and the social and economic changes in British life as reflected in the growth of the power of public opinion through a cheaper and more influential press."

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<sup>1</sup> George Bubb took the surname Dodington after he had succeeded to his uncle's estate in 1720

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